

Sparrow (Samuel)

E S S A Y S

• A N D

D I A L O G U E S,

M O R A L A N D R E L I G I O U S.

W I T H

A n A P P E N D I X,

C O N T A I N I N G

A C O R R E S P O N D E N C E B E T W I X T T H E R E V.
M R . J . W E S L E Y A N D T H E A U T H O R.

T O W H I C H I S A D D E D,

A F U N E R A L S E R M O N,
F O R T H E A U T H O R;

P R E A C H E D I N

P R I N C E S - S T R E E T , W E S T M I N S T E R,

B Y A N D R E W K I P P I S , D . D .

C H E S T E R F I E L D ;

P R I N T E D B Y J . B R A D L E Y , 1782.

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D I A L O G U E S

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A B A P P E A R I N G

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M R . J . W E S T A N D T H E A U T H O R



A T T H E S E R M O N S
F O R A U T H O R

P R E F A C E

P R I N T E R S - S T R E E T , W E S T M I N S T E R

B Y A N D R E W K I N G , D . D .

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C H E S T E R F E L D

P R I N T E D A T J . B R A D L E Y

ADVERTISEMENT,

By the EDITOR.

THE following Effays, &c. formed the pleasing amusement of some leisure hours. They have been selected from the Author's Manuscripts, not without the hope of their being serviceable to his friends, and the Public.

For the character of the Author, the Reader is referred to the Funeral Sermon, (page 203) preached by the Rev. Dr. KIPPIS.

Published by the same Author,

(a few Years ago, during his Life Time,)

FAMILY PRAYERS, and MORAL ESSAYS,

In VERSE and PROSE.

ADVERTISING

By the Editor

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A SERMON, On the Death of the Author. By Dr. K I P P I S.

REVELATIONS, xiv. 13. <i>And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their la- bours ; and their works do follow them.</i> ——— —	179
	ON

O N
DIVINE GOVERNMENT
B Y
D E L E G A T I O N.

THE Divine Government (so far as we have any means of knowing it) appears to be executed by Delegation. The sacred records inform us, that this great and beautiful fabric of the world was made by the ministration of the Son of God. We are there likewise instructed, that Angels are his ministring spirits sent forth on various occasions to execute his will to the children of men. These servants of God, vested with all that knowledge, wisdom, and power which suits their commission, act no doubt as good men do, when from a regard to duty, and a principle of benevolence, they assist and relieve such objects as the light of nature, or Revelation recommend to their regard.

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There are intimations in scripture, that the celestial inhabitants are interested in our welfare. We are particularly told, there is joy in heaven at the repentance of a sinner; and that (speaking of little children) their angels always behold the face of their heavenly Father; perhaps suggesting, that they are constantly attendant upon their charge. Angels are certainly no idle spectators of the affairs of men. They have been, and still are the immediate agents and executors of the divine pleasure in this world.

WE are led by the consideration of the benignity of God, and the harmony of his government, to conclude, that whatever appears best calculated to enlarge the circle of social felicity, is a part of that divine constitution established by the great author of nature. There is certainly great pleasure and satisfaction in the belief and contemplation of good Beings, though invisible, being ever present with us, to help us in our exigences, when they see that we merit their favour. And when they observe in us, arrogance and pride, obstinacy and ill-will, we may then be thought undeserving their notice; that they will resent the affront given to the supreme Being,
and

and with just indignation, leave us to reap the fruit of our own folly and wickedness.

THE vast variety of comforts and enjoyments which children receive from their parents, the poor from the benevolent, the public from legislators and patriots, have a natural tendency to excite sensations of lasting gratitude and love. If then generous acts of kindness exercised amongst men, are acknowledged to be a just foundation of affection here, let it not be thought strange, that offices of benevolence and guardian care performed to mankind by superior beings, should be the ground-work and basis of everlasting affection to them in another state.

FOR the wisest reasons they are no doubt invisible to us, and our knowledge of them, but imperfect and obscure; were they visible, might not there be some danger of our transferring to them, that homage and praise, which is due only to God.

A proper attention to the diversity of circumstances and orders of society, would easily suggest, that its greatest degree of happiness requires the concurrence of all its members. It is mani-

4 ON DIVINE GOVERNMENT

festly the will of heaven, that every individual should act as its representative in doing good to all, in proportion to his degree of ability. Princes and magistrates, parents and masters are all in their several departments, ministers of God, for good to all with whom they are connected; and when justice and equity are their rule of conduct, peace, prosperity, concord and happiness, generally take place. Where vice is very prevalent in any community, so as almost to threaten its immediate destruction, yet such is the kind provision made for the people's welfare, that a few just and upright men by their fervent prayers, may procure blessings to a nation, as well as to themselves. If the personal righteousness of only ten inhabitants, would have saved a whole city from destruction; if the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, the inference is obvious, that pious good men are the best subjects of any government.

SUCH is the wisdom and excellence of this divine plan of government by delegation, such the established order of heaven, that there is no one person who from his heart does good to another, but feels more inward satisfaction, more substantial

stantial pleasure, than could arise from any enjoyments sacrificed to it.—Who that deserves the name of man, ever repented succouring the distressed, or doing good even to an enemy? Who that knows what goodness means, could refuse loving such a man, if well assured, that neither ostentation, or reward, had any concern in the action. This is the duty of all. This is genuine christianity. This is imitating the great example of the christian Lawgiver, who freely took our nature upon him, and the more effectually to induce men to obedience to God, and to love one another, humbled himself to the lowest condition of life, and by that means, took away the reproach of poverty from the indigent; and when he had given to the world, the strongest proofs of his divine mission, he then (agreeable to divine appointment) permitted the enemies of truth, to shew their rancour and malice against his perfect innocence, by executing him on the cross. What an astonishing event was this! What a striking instance of divine love to mankind! What a lesson of humility, obedience and philanthropy is here! This is a scene that angels beheld with wonder and surprize, and
which

6 ON DIVINE GOVERNMENT

which thousands of saints will ever remember with unspeakable gratitude and praise. What a sacrifice was here! Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world! Behold the full accomplishment of that gracious consolatory promise to our first parents, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head! The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin, is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

IF the supreme governor of the world, chuse to convey his blessings to this world by the ministration of our Lord Jesus Christ, or by the agency of any other intelligent beings, it ill becomes any one to controvert his pleasure, or to call in question, the wisdom of such an appointment. Shall the thing formed, say to him who formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Every one in his proper sphere, has it in his power to be useful, to contribute to the general good of mankind, and even to the joy of angels. Thus all mankind stand upon equal ground, if it is estimated by their obedience, and the free exertion of their abilities to do good to their fellow-creatures.

WHO-

WHOEVER duly considers the ill use that is commonly made of great estates, shining talents, sparkling wit, vast erudition, high honours and princely power, can have no reason to indulge an envious wish, or to repine at his more humble sphere of action. Great abundance seldom proves the means of kindling the flame of gratitude to the divine donor; or exciting a spirit of benevolence and tender affection to our fellow-creatures. On the contrary, these often swell the mind with insolence, ingratitude and pride, steep the faculties in sensuality, and give passion a stronger impulse and wider range. Thus men of large fortunes, high honours, and popular abilities, being flattered by their own vanity, intoxicated with power, and the adulation of parasites, frequently sink below the common level, become pests to society, enemies to themselves, and rebels to their maker,

As we are instructed by scripture, that intermediate good beings are witnesses to our conduct, (though invisible) so there is reason to believe, that they have power to assist us in times of extremity, and refuse not their aid when our conduct is sincere and humble, when
they

they perceive we are willing to correct our errors, and amend our ways. Otherwise, afflictions appear the only means to bring us to reason and duty ; for we must never expect to be compelled to our duty. God's service is perfect freedom, and must proceed from the heart, or it will be rejected.

Nothing truly excellent can be acquired at once, or without attention and labor. In the vegetable and animal creation, we see nothing attain at once to a state of maturity. Their beginnings are too minute for man's investigation. By slow degrees and gradual progression, they all arrive at their destined end. After that, they decay, and return to their primeval dust. If we may reason from analogy, the infant state of all created beings is imperfect, weak and dependent ; so that rationals as well as animals are put under the care of those who are nearest in connection, more experienced, and of suitable abilities, till such time as they arrive at that degree of maturity as will enable them to shift for themselves, and act with freedom their allotted part. What exquisite beauty and harmony appear in this divine plan of delegation ! Heaven and earth, angels

gels and men, are all united as one large family, under the authority of the same common father. By this benevolent plan of government, (by delegation) our obligations to the deity are encreased, because every blessing thus communicated, becomes more valuable, as tending to unite and cement, in affection and love, all this great family of intellectual beings. As all the numerous blessings we enjoy, whether procured by our industry, or the agency of other men, are with gratitude to be ascribed to God, so when extraordinary benefits are conveyed to us by the ministration of invisible agents, (who excel in strength, and who are always ready to execute with alacrity the divine will,) the glory of all is due to God alone.

BUT it may be asked, if angels observe the conduct of mankind, and possess all that power which is here suggested, why don't they do all the good they can? prevent hurtful and dangerous errors, painful disorders, lingering sicknesses, distressed poverty, cruel tyranny, and all public calamities, and guide men into the clear knowledge and practice of their duty?

To which we may fairly reply, that certainly we are not competent judges, of what is best for us upon the whole. When we consider our present state in connexion with the future, the weakness of our judgment, and magnitude of the object, it becomes us to be modest and diffident in our opinions, concerning things of so difficult and mysterious a nature. We find by experience, that disappointments are oftentimes very advantageous to us, afflictions salutary, labor, both of body and mind, useful, invigorating and improving; and on the contrary, that inactivity, indulgence and sloth are enervating, debilitating and pernicious. What we call evils, prove oftentimes blessings in disguise. Prosperity, saith Solomon, is the destruction of fools. Voluptuous living, intemperate mirth and vicious company, weaken, if not quite destroy, the influence of good principles, and at the same time injure the constitution, and contaminate the mind.

It is worthy of remark, that the clearest conviction, and the most perfect knowledge, of what is right and best to be done, will not secure right action. When bad habits are once established
and

and countenanced by the example of those we are intimate with, we often see, that men of the most shining talents, and improved understandings, fall a sacrifice to pride, sensuality, covetousness and ambition; who by a little self-denial, manly virtue, humility, and a grateful attention to the will of heaven, would have risen to true dignity and honor, attracted the admiration and esteem of mankind, and felt themselves happy, inconceivably so, in the approbation and favor of their Maker. Such men would do honor to human nature, be great ornaments and blessings to community, bid fair to put vice out of countenance, and by encouraging virtue would spread happiness all around. But if men, notwithstanding their daily errors, will not acknowledge their weakness, nor apply for assistance, though tendered to them in the kindest manner, they must take the consequence. By their self-sufficiency and obstinacy, they preclude themselves from divine mercy, and render themselves unfit objects of commiseration and regard.

WITH respect to angels not giving help to the proper objects of their charge, when involved in important difficulties,

we have no reason to think that they are ever backward, or refuse their aid, when, by humble and devout supplication, men look up to heaven for direction and help. But wilful obstinacy, presumption, ingratitude, pride and sensuality, are not creatures of ignorance, but of daring rebellion, and merit no compassion. Involuntary errors and infirmities are the common lot of humanity, and a just foundation for hope in the divine mercy; they afford likewise a reasonable claim upon all subordinate beings, who have it in their power to relieve us. These weaknesses have not the nature of guilt in them, but only in proportion to mens own wilful neglect of the means afforded, for rectifying their conduct. Sincerity, humility, and integrity, are practicable by all, and are doubtless the indispensable duty of the whole family of God, both angels and men. If the former are chargeable with folly, when they venture upon the confines of their knowledge, in judging of matters of difficult investigation, we cannot wonder to see mankind subject to the same imputation. Hence we may learn the necessity, as well as propriety, of every intelligent being addressing the
Majesty

Majesty of heaven, for wisdom to regulate his conduct. Hence we see our great need of humility, and the importance of that divine command, which enjoins the exercise of all benevolent actions to one another; a constant circulation of which, would soften the cares of life, and much enlarge the sphere of human happiness. As in an excellent piece of music, all harsh discordant sounds offend the ear, and spoil the harmony; so in the grand concert of universal nature, the jarring tongues of falsehood, injustice, and perfidy, grate tremendous on the mental ear—

“and mar the moral song mellifluent.”

Who that ever experienced the heart-felt pleasure of benevolent actions, can deny to this plan of delegation, the highest wisdom and most consummate goodness? To be the almoners of heaven, is an office highly honorable, delightful, and glorious; but they only are best qualified for it, whose hearts glow with a supreme love to God, and a sincere affection to their fellow-creatures. Notwithstanding all our imperfections and weaknesses, we are graciously encouraged to aspire after the high honor, of some resemblance to our Creator, in his moral perfect-

perfections. The means he has put into our hands, and it is incumbent upon us to apply them, as occasions present, with fidelity, care, and diligence.

WILL not this view of the Divine Government, (by delegation) furnish an answer to Dr. Hawksworth's objection against a particular providence, as being inconsistent with the immutability of the deity? might not some reasons be offered, why angels may be supposed to have power sufficient to suspend the laws of nature? But this I leave to some abler pen.



O N

DIVINE GOODNESS.

WHO that surveys the Creation of God, and considers the vast provision which he has made for the welfare and happiness of man, but must feel his breast glow with lively gratitude? If goodness appears the brightest ray of deity, and the best foundation for admiration and love; that generous divine love which unites all the sons of glory in one blissful family, and tunes to concord and harmony all the heavenly choir, and even in this chequered scene can counter-balance all the troubles of human life; then it must be admitted, that whoever obstinately persists in a course of ingratitude to God, and hostility to men, rejecting the appointed means of restoration to the divine favor, and hope of eternal life, such a man forfeits all compassion and tender regard, and cuts himself off from all the blessings

blessings of society, and from that happiness, which is always found in connexion with free obedience, active goodness, and generous love. To expect the end, without the means being made use of; to expect a good disposition of mind, without our own concurrence, would be as absurd, as to expect a plentiful harvest, without first tilling the ground, and sowing the seed. The divine ear is ever open to the prayer of the humble; all necessary assistance is imparted to the weak and lowly suppliant. God giveth liberally and upbraideth not.

DOETH not every one depend upon God for all that he possesseth? Is not health a most valuable blessing, though in general we are so little sensible of its worth? without this, what are all the other enjoyments of life? are not the regular and unceasing supplies of our returning wants, raiment, food, rest, and sleep, calls of acknowledgement? are not all the pleasures of friendship, all the means of knowledge, and all advantages for improvement and usefulness, the free gifts of heaven? nay more; are there not placed within the reach of our own industry and skill, a vast variety of other pleasures and enjoy-

enjoyments, made more exquisite, by the necessity of exerting our own powers in their acquisition? The means of human felicity are certainly amply provided, and liberally bestowed on the children of men; and the true causes of their disappointment, are manifestly their own ingratitude and disobedience.

“GOODNESS is the foundation-stone of creation, the inexhaustible source of all felicity. Angels, principalities, and powers, as well as man, and all subordinate beings, derive their existence from this divine principle. How adorable then is that being, whose nature is goodness itself! How munificent, how extensive his bounty! How astonishing his condescension, in uniting in one family, all created intelligences in heaven, and in earth. Himself, their common parent, illuminating all with the same celestial ray of reason; thereby pointing out their duty, both to himself, and to one another; and diversifying his gifts, for mutual aid, social connexions, friendly offices, and virtuous improvements.”

AND when, through seduction, the lowest order fell from their allegiance, forfeited their being, and incurred the divine displeasure, mercy interposed,
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and easy terms of reconciliation were made known to man. To strike pride dumb, and enforce the doctrines of obedience and humility, Jesus, though Lord of all, became servant of all, submitted to the lowest offices of humanity, endured, with mildness and patience, the scorn and unjust reproaches of men, nor shunned to seal the truth with his blood. To restore lapsed man to rectitude and eternal life, he freely gave himself up to the excruciating death of the cross. If we are not quite lost to the feelings of humanity, generosity and goodness, such amazing condescension, such unexampled benevolence, must attract our affections, excite the most grateful sensations, and impress the stamp of divinity upon our hearts. With what fervent gratitude and joy, should we approach the presence of his Father, and our Father, of his God, and our God, to celebrate his praise, to adore his Majesty, and to worship before him!

NOR can natural evils be any just objection to the goodness of God. We cannot say, it would be better for mankind, to be exempted from the calamities of human life. As we are not competent judges of their sanative virtue;
nay,

may, as we are certain of their usefulness in many cases, they may be as necessary for the health of the soul, as some unpleasant medicines are for a dis-tempered body. If the common evils of life were totally banished out of the world, if nothing but prosperity and festive mirth was to succeed, what would be the probable effect? would such constant scenes of gaiety and sensual pleasure meliorate the temper, and incline the heart to God? What is the fact? do not afflictions often prove the means, of reclaiming men from habits of vice, of dissolving their too strong attachment to objects of sense, and fixing their attention upon spiritual and eternal concerns? When men find themselves quite at ease, in full possession of health, peace, plenty, power, and influence, it is rare to see such persons preserve their integrity, regulate their passions, and subject their conduct to the divine will. Temptations to luxury, sensuality, vanity, injustice, and tyranny, are seldom strongly resisted, especially where there is a prospect of indulgence with impunity.

It may be asked, whether any good reason can be assigned, why the mind of man was not made with such a propen-

sity to right action, as would have secured him from all hurtful error, and all possibility of sinning, and thus have prevented his disturbing the harmony of the universe? as this thought may frequently occur to a contemplative mind, it may be worth while to give it a little consideration.

LET it be remembered, that as the highest degree of perfection to which any created being can be supposed capable of arriving, must depend upon his proximity, or resemblance, to the Divine Character, in moral rectitude and goodness, by a constant practice of righteousness; then it will necessarily follow, that all original impressions which operate upon the mind, like gravitation upon matter, or as instinct in animals, must (with regard to the freedom and dignity of moral action) remove such being, to a greater distance from the standard of all perfection.

THE nature of this question seems to suggest, that rational beings might be made capable of resembling their Creator, by means of constraint and necessity, in his most glorious perfections of truth, goodness, and holiness, by principles no higher than those which actuate mere animals,

animals, such as instinctive propensities, and irresistible impulses—But is there no difference between the beauty and amiableness of actions compelled, and necessary, and those which result from free deliberate choice?—Can any agent challenge the love and esteem of others, for such actions as he was forced to perform? Such an agent can be considered in no higher estimation than an instrument, a machine, or automaton, directed by a foreign power. We can never love a machine, (let its movements be ever so exact) in the manner we love and respect a person, who (influenced by gratitude to God, and benevolence to mankind) delights in doing good, in promoting the welfare and happiness of his fellow-creatures.

THE only question then should be, by what means can we come at the possession of this divine principle of right action? Have we command and power over our own tempers and inward dispositions, so as to change them when we please, surrounded as we are with temptations and allurements to vice, strengthened by evil examples, and bad habits?—assuredly no; with such clogs and impediments, no man can of himself clear his
his

his way, and arrive at this desirable state of mind. But then, for our comfort, we are instructed by the sacred records of truth, that there is sufficient help at hand, kindly tendered to us, which will counter-balance every difficulty, and enable us to come off more than conquerors, if we will but attend to the divine instructions, and seek, with humility and fervor, in the name of our blessed Saviour, for pardon, acceptance, and grace. We are not to expect any miraculous interposition, or to have any force put upon the will; if we are sincere, we shall fear to offend, shun temptation, confess our weakness, and pray for divine aid. In this line of duty we may hope, with a filial confidence, for the divine blessing and favor, and thus by degrees grow in wisdom, in knowledge, and all righteousness—can we conceive it possible, that any one who does a useful action, from no better motive than ostentation, interest, fear, or from a principle of instinct, can experience that sweet satisfaction, and manly pleasure, which flow from a sense of free, voluntary, grateful obedience to the will of heaven, however discovered.

BUT

BUT some ill instructed zealot will object, that we are shaped in iniquity, and came into the world depraved, inclined to all manner of evil, and averse to what is good; and who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?

THAT mankind are sadly depraved, must be confessed, but till such time as revelation discovers this to be the true and natural state of mankind, it seems more modest and reasonable, to tax ourselves with the charge, and to look for the source of those evils, in education, indulged passions, example, and flattery. However inclined men are to exculpate themselves, it is very certain, that all admonition, counsel, and instruction, proceed upon this established opinion, that men are free agents; as the complexion of the human mind appears to depend upon moral actions, so by a course of right action, by the practice of gratitude, justice, truth, and righteousness, men cannot help loving those virtues; and the more they practice, the stronger their affection, till at length, they feel their spirit and temper refine, and improve into some faint resemblance of his most amiable character, who went about doing good, and whose meat and
drink

drink it was, to do the will of his heavenly Father. There is no imitating so bright an example, without being irradiated with its glory. Neither can any man habituate himself to acts of impiety, ingratitude, injustice, and unrighteousness, without contracting correspondent dispositions, corrupt affections, and depravity of heart. Why should it appear more difficult or strange, that a good and honest disposition of mind should be the result of a course of right action, of free genuine obedience to the voice of wisdom, than that earth, air, and sun, should all be necessary to the production of plants from their seeds, and to ripen the fruits of the earth. Did not the same Lord of nature appoint and order both? If we practised truth and justice more, we should not want excuses, nor rack invention for artful disguises, to deceive ourselves, and one another. How common is it to blame our passions for leading us wrong, when we shut our eyes to follow them? The human frame, so far as we are capable of judging, is certainly most admirably contrived, and fitted for the various purposes of improvement and usefulness, for private, domestic, and social happiness. Every
passion,

passion, when rightly used, contributes to man's felicity, and is a just foundation for grateful praise, obedience, and love, to his Creator. The passions are only hurtful, when abused, when they are suffered to take the lead, and become our masters, instead of servants. As the best meats, taken to excess, produce surfeits and dangerous diseases, so the sweetest pleasures, when too much indulged, or unjustly obtained, prey like a cancer, and debilitate the soul.

EVERY wilful deviation from the path of duty, not only leads into error, and discourages the friendly aid of those invisible good beings, who take delight in doing us good, but leads likewise into an enemy's country, where every species of fraud and ruin are practised, with the greatest success. There are few or none so profligate (till hackneyed in the ways of vice) as to commit wickedness without temptation, though they might be undiscovered; which could not have been the case, if human nature was really so depraved originally, as to taint necessarily the whole species, and which some learned, as well as unlearned men, find it necessary to maintain, in support of their established principles. It is to be

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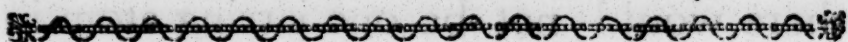
hoped,

hoped, there are few so bad, but would like to be good, if they could be so with little trouble. But to think of breaking through the obstacles of long-established habits, to sacrifice darling lusts and sensual gratifications, to become, it may be, the ridicule of a man's boon companions, require more good sense and resolution, than people in general possess, or approve of. Though objects of sense make the first impression upon our minds, and by that means lead the passions, yet we are not to infer from thence, that they are to govern us any longer, than till reason is capable of holding the reins of government, and regulating all their motions.

NOR can the obscurity of revelation be urged, as an objection against the divine goodness, since the degree of guilt, and consequently punishment, will be in proportion to mens abuse of the talents intrusted, and strength of evidence resisted.

FROM what we are capable of observing, we may presume, that all rational creatures, are sent into existence with improveable talents, with powers of action so diversified, as the better to promote extensive good. Were all to concur in grateful obedience to the will of heaven,
there

there would not be one jarring atom in the whole creation, but everlasting songs of joy and happiness would universally resound. The divine pleasure which all rational creatures feel, when from free and willing obedience to heaven, they execute its will, is a strong encouragement to go on, in that most delectable path of duty. And though our best services can be beneficial only to creatures like ourselves, yet such is the condescension and goodness of our heavenly Father, that they are accepted, as if of service to himself. What an unrivalled claim does the consideration of such goodness make upon our gratitude, praise, and love? and to which, we are still further animated, by the noblest motives that can possibly actuate the human mind, the glorious hopes of divine favor, and a blissful immortality.



T H O U G H T S

O N

C R E A T I O N.

THERE is in all the great works of nature, such a noble simplicity of stile, such sublimity of design, such exquisite beauty, and harmony, as charm the attentive mind, and fill the soul with pleasing wonder, and delightful astonishment. Who can view the wonders of creation, the magnificent productions of divine power, their variety, their beauty, their order, and use, and not prostrate himself before God with devout adoration?

THE description given by the sacred historian, of the creation of the world, though brief, is yet clear, full, and sublime. In the beginning God created the heavens, and the earth. As the glory of creation was to be ascribed to God alone, so we find here no intimation of the agency of any other being. But, that secured, the historian proceeds to inform us, of some further particulars, relating to this subject.

God said, let there be light, and there was light. Let us make man, &c. which
plainly

plainly intimates the agency of another being, concerned in the great work of creation, to whom God gave powers, adequate to that high commission. For wise reasons many ages elapsed, before mankind was informed of this great personage, by whom this high commission was executed; and also of his bearing that significant name the *Word* of God, so fully expressive of the divine will. How conspicuous, how illustriously bright, does divine wisdom and goodness shine forth, in this great appointment? That he, by whom God made the world, and thereby became more particularly interested in its welfare, should likewise be appointed man's Saviour, and final Judge. That this glorious Being, should, for our sakes, and, the more effectually to induce our obedience to his Father's will, divest himself of that glory, which he had with him, before the world was made, and condescend to take upon him human nature; to submit, not only to the common calamities of human life, such as hunger, and thirst, and fatigue, but even to revilings, and the grossest insults, and at last to an infamous death, a painful crucifixion.

O the depth of the wisdom and goodness of God!

O N

F E A R A N D G R A T I T U D E

A S

S P R I N G S O F A C T I O N.

THOUGH fear is but a slavish passion, and gives no beauty or lustre to any action; though it often gives a false alarm, and exposes to inconvenience and trouble; yet without it, mankind would be in a perpetual state of hostility, never secure from acts of violence, and oppression. Fear therefore is necessary (for the order and good government of the world) to every individual with regard to his own private interest, as well as to the community at large, till such time as habits of virtue, and christian principles, have disciplined the passions to reason, and the love of virtue predominates in the mind. Then slavish fear will be transformed into filial fear, and all the little narrow affections be refined, and spiritualized, into grateful and benevo-

benevolent ones. Then will commence the glorious æra of unrestrained, liberal obedience, founded in sacred love to the best beings, and solicitude for the welfare of all our fellow-creatures. Divested of mean selfish motives of action, we shall want neither fear, nor hope, to keep us in the path of duty, but with hearts glowing with gratitude, we shall rejoice to obey the divine commands. We know that perfect love casteth out fear.

THE best, the noblest principle of action, is gratitude. He who performs the divine will, from a sense of gratitude, may justly challenge the most respectable character amongst men, accompanied with the esteem of all good beings, and the favor and approbation of God. How low is their virtue, who refuse to do what they know to be just and right, unless assured of being rewarded for it? or, who are not satisfied with the deductions of reason, and the authority of revelation, but demand evidence equal to that of sight, before they will consent to sacrifice any darling passion, or set about the great work of personal reformation. Will any person venture to assert, that there is no real difference between these two characters?

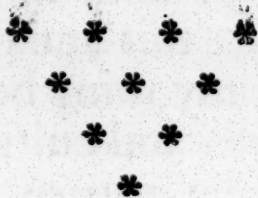
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Does not the one appear most amiable, rational, and excellent; the other, illiberal, sordid, and despicable? and why may we not conclude, that this contrast appears equally striking to all good beings, throughout the universe. As ingratitude is the offspring of a narrow, selfish spirit, so free rational obedience, proceeding from a grateful sense of obligation, is the best mark we can give, of a good understanding, and generous mind. Every man, who is conscious of his own integrity and obedience to his Maker, feels in his breast such sacred pleasure, as renders other arguments in favor of religion unnecessary. Such a person cannot hesitate a moment, in breathing out his fervent praises to that gracious Being, who constituted the whole frame of nature, and replenished the earth, with inexhaustible treasures of good.

SUCH is the nature of genuine christianity, such the consequence of fidelity and obedience to God, that there is no temporal loss, no persecution, but is amply repaid, by the consolations of christianity, by the peace of God which passeth all understanding, far beyond the conception of infidels, and men of corrupt

corrupt minds. This language, it is true, they will consider as the vapour of enthusiasm, the effect of priestcraft, education, and weakness, being as unintelligible to them, as music to the deaf; yet these are well known truths, and echoed through all ages, as founded on the experience of the wisest and best of men.

THE voice of reason calls upon every man, to worship, adore, and praise, his Creator. Whoever would act agreeably to the nature and dignity of man, must attend to his Creator's will, and freely obey his commands, whether discoverable by the light of his own understanding alone, or by the aid of revelation.



O N

HUMILITY AND PRIDE.

TRUE genuine humility is not only the mind's best ornament, but it is the proper foundation and groundwork of all human excellencies. As it is the duty of all, so it lies within the reach of every man's ability, and sheds a lustre on the character of every being in the universe. In the eye of Deity, it renders a low-roofed cottage, preferable to a gilded palace, and an honest man in rags, superior to sceptered tyrants. For he who casteth contempt upon princes, declares, that he will even dwell with him, who is meek and humble in heart. Can any thing stronger be said, in praise of this excellent virtue, this amiable disposition of mind? can any thing be more worthy of our solicitude, and cultivation? What so likely, in the nature of things, to damp the kindling flames of strife and animosity, to conciliate affection, and prevent immoderate anger? Is there any thing so proper, to keep the judgment
from

from a wrong bias, and secure us from error, as modest diffidence, and a continual sense of our own weakness and fallibility. There is certainly nothing mean, or debasing, in a frank confession of our imperfections and errors; in letting the world know, that we prefer truth to falsehood, integrity to duplicity, and sincerity to flattery. As there is nothing can counter-balance the loss, or want, of this inestimable virtue, so it behoves every one, to seek after its acquirement, and to give himself no rest, till he finds by its effects, that he is actually in possession of it. To this end it might be of signal use to enquire,

AM I really what I profess to be, strictly just and honest? am I sincere and upright? Don't I want to deceive myself, and others, to avoid inward reproach, and outward censure? When opposed in opinion by others, am I not less concerned for truth than reputation? Have I that regard to the will of heaven, as to acquiesce therein without murmuring, when afflictions or disappointments come upon me? am I willing to forego any present sensual gratification, for the sake of, what my reason tells me is, the divine will? or do I hunt after excuses,

and shut my eyes against conviction. Am I disposed to value myself, upon any natural, or acquired, endowments of body or mind? Alas, nothing is more fallacious, nothing more unbecoming, and pregnant of evil, than such a thought. What have I, that I did not receive? Did I frame, and animate, my own body? are the powers of reflection, contemplation, investigation, &c. of my own procuring? on the contrary, are they not all (as well as the means of intellectual improvement, pleasure, and utility) the free gifts of my Creator? Is not gratitude then, expressed by a constant series of acts of obedience, a most reasonable service?—Were it possible for all the powers upon the earth, to combine in propagating the contrary opinion; though they might threaten, and persecute, yet they could never change the nature of right and wrong; nor, by all their united authority, turn the scale against the superior weight of my obligations to Deity. Does not common justice demand a grateful return; a solicitous concern to express my sense of divine goodness, which unmerited I daily receive from his liberal hand. Now how can I better do this, than by obedience to his commands,

mands, by a filial fear of offending him, and love to his service. It can never be wrong to praise my benefactor, to worship my Creator, and humbly to hope in his mercy and goodness. It can never be wrong, to imitate him in acts of righteousness, justice, truth, and holiness. Let but experience determine the wisdom, and propriety, of such a conduct, and conviction will be full. How ungenerous is it, to reproach any for natural imperfections? How base and infamous, to wallow in sensuality, at the expence of justice, truth, and righteousness. What folly is he chargeable with, who is willing to forego the hopes of eternal life, for illicit pleasures. Yet this is the conduct of those, who make not God their confidence, but depend upon their own sagacity and wisdom. They sow to the wind, and will reap the whirlwind. Do the luxury and refined pleasures, of the great and wealthy, attract my desire, and stir up envy in my breast, let me remember, that when those pleasures are most perfect and full, they can never give that sweet delight, that permanent joy, which a conscientious regard to Deity imparts.

THOUGH

THOUGH pride, when stripped of all disguise, is an object of universal execration, yet strange to tell, when drest by the hand of flattery, and varnished with the pencil of vanity, it becomes an idol, that finds an altar in almost every breast, and is with great difficulty (if ever) expelled from its sacrilegious usurpation. It is by giving way to flattery, that this baneful inmate insinuates itself into the human heart, where, when once fixed, it gives the judgment a wrong bias, depraves the will, and poisons all the springs of real happiness. As a false friend is more dangerous than an open enemy, so self-flattery betrays men into ruin; without alarming their fears; and whoever disregards truth, can have no security against delusion. He who looks upon pride as a venial sin, should consider well its nature and consequences. Its gains are only visionary, the aerial fabrics of imagination, which, like the gilded cloud, shine for a moment, dissolve into vapour, and then disappear. But the evils which it produces, are extensive and permanent. Pride, not only obstructs improvement and usefulness, but renders its possessor inimical to Society,

ciety, and incapable of the joys of heaven, and eternal life.

IN the sacred writings, we find many clear and strong protests against pride, such particularly as these ;

PROV. xvi. 5. Every one that is proud of heart, is an abomination to the Lord. —18th. Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.— James iv. 6. God resisted the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.

As pride is stigmatized with the strongest marks of divine displeasure, it behoves every one, who fears to offend his Maker, to examine faithfully his own heart, and steadily to watch, and fervently to pray, against the suggestions of pride, and the flattery, and lies, of so ensnaring an enemy. If the clear evidence of our own frailty, weakness, and dependance, will not operate sufficiently, for the cure of this internal malady, we ought then to welcome afflictions and disappointments, troubles and mortifications, if nothing else will eradicate the evil, and establish the health of the soul,

O N O U R
SAVIOUR'S APPEARANCE
I N T H E
W O R L D.

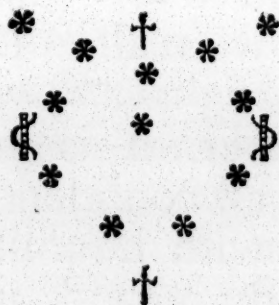
HE who made the world, put himself upon a level, with the lowest of his servants, made himself of no reputation, but carefully shunned all that pomp, and parade, which mankind are so extremely fond of. He came, not to do his own will, but the will of his Father; recommending in the strongest manner, (by precept and example) meekness, humility, piety, temperance, justice, truth, righteousness, benevolence, and charity; those essential requisites to divine favor, to true dignity, and eternal life. Had this Divine Personage visited the earth, arrayed in all the regal pomp and glory of Majesty; had he been attended with splendid hosts of ministering angels,

angels, universal homage would have been paid him, hecatombs of oblations would have announced his advent, and peals of festive joy would have been reverberated through the world. But would this have reformed mankind, or reconciled them to their duty, or enforced effectually the practice of those duties before-mentioned? Would such an appearance have restrained the tongue of falshood, subdued the irregularity of the passions, and disciplined the will to self-denial, whenever the interests of truth, justice, righteousness, and benevolence required it. Daily experience evinceth, that something more than mere evidence is requisite, to manumit the slaves of vice, and break the chains of evil habits, and to restore men to perfect freedom. If we really desire to do always what is right, and wish not to offend our Maker, it is necessary, that we renounce all confidence in our own strength, and with humility, and sincerity, implore divine aid, under all trials and difficulties. What vain creatures should we become, if we had our wishes gratified with an increase of power, and more ample means of sensual indulgence, and then left to ourselves without con-

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troul. If we may judge by their conduct, who have almost every thing at command, which this world can furnish them with, such a state would be exceeding hazardous to our souls, and give temptation greater force. There are but few so humble, as to be able to bear prosperity with advantage; disappointments, and adverse scenes, become necessary to reclaim us, when gratitude ceases to operate, and sensual pleasures engross our affections.



O N T H E
H U M A N W I L L.

AS it is the will that characterizes the man, and gives to every moral action its natural complexion; and as there must always be an adequate cause to determine volition, so it is of great importance to examine, how far man is accountable for the actions he performs; the disposition of his will appearing as much beyond his immediate power to controul, as his appetites of hunger and thirst.

IF the will of man, derive from nature any particular bias, or inclination, in favour of some things preferable to others, or aversion to some more than others; or if any intelligent beings have access to the mind of man, so as to influence his will in any degree; then it must be acknowledged, that so far as such bias or influence go, neither commendation nor blame, can be justly given to the agent so acting. But if the will

of man is of a changeable nature, found to be so by the suffrages of all nations, and the experience of people in every age of the world, then we ought to consider, how, and by what means, this change is made. All the children of men are certainly weak erroneous creatures, but capable of instruction, and of following wise and good counsel, to which they are encouraged, and stimulated, by motives of advantage, or threatening of mischief, if neglected. At the same time they have liberty and power to refuse assistance, and to rely upon their own strength and wisdom, for their present and future welfare. It is by adhering to good advice, that youth adopt good principles, and by acting upon such principles they experience such happy effects, as bias their will in favor of justice, righteousness, and integrity. Minds so inclined, and thence imbued with those virtues, cannot fail loving all good beings, and Him supremely who is most excellent. The will of such men improves by exercise, brightens by collision, and refines by difficulties. By this means habits of virtue are established, and the path of right action becomes most eligible and pleasing.

pleasing. Thus we see how the will of man, from an unbiassed state, may be wrought into a heavenly temper, and divine disposition. If the means given to mankind for this purpose prove insufficient, through any occurrence out of their power to prevent, then no doubt a good and merciful Judge will deal with them accordingly. But if through wilful neglect of the means, and an obstinate resistance of good advice, these means fail of success, the consequent natural effects will be a bad, selfish, wicked disposition, unfit for any trust or confidence, inimical to society, and discordant to the harmony of the universe, and as such, an object of universal execration to all good beings. If therefore such is the settled order and constitution of things, that a course of voluntary action will certainly produce, in the mind or will of man, correspondent dispositions to virtue or vice; then it is evident, that the prevailing bent and disposition of the will is in man's own power, and that consequently they are accountable creatures, and proper objects of love and favor, or dislike and just resentment. Though the means afforded to introduce a virtuous course of
action,

action, are great and many, both from hope and fear; yet they never were designed to operate in such a manner, as to overbear the freedom of the human mind, and compel men to be good. That those great springs of action operate so feebly is certainly peoples own fault; they help each other to weaken their influence, and prevent the kind intended effect. Hope and fear, instruction and example, emulation, love and hatred, when properly directed, are powerful motives to the acquisition of good habits, and rectitude of will; and like streams united into one current, move, when joined together, with such force, as is almost sufficient to bear down all opposition. The path of duty then will become easy, and delightful. Filial fear will take place of servile fear, free and grateful obedience of constrained or mercenary service, respecting our Creator, and a generous benevolent solicitude (instead of a narrow contracted spirit) for the welfare of all mankind.

It is equally the ordination of heaven, that the mind of man, when daily exercised by virtuous and good actions, should in due time produce a suitable temper, and corresponding disposition of will,

will, as that arable ground, well cultivated, and sown with good seed, should yield, in its season, a plentiful harvest. When by this means the will is fixed and determined, in favor of truth and righteousness, all will go right, difficulties will vanish, virtues flourish, the world recede, and heaven appear in view. The love of truth will make us sensible of our own weakness, and that will induce humility, and humility will recommend us to divine mercy. By a just and upright conduct, we may be assured of the approbation and favor of our Maker, and then we can have nothing to fear, but every thing to hope for.

ON the other hand, when by a bad education, indulged passions, and evil examples, the will contracts a wrong bias, a narrow selfish spirit predominates; sensual pleasures take the lead, deception, flattery, and injustice soon follow, and distress, disappointment, and misery, bring up the rear.

As time strengthens and confirms habits, so the difficulty of reformation must of course, be so much the greater, the longer bad habits have continued. Yet such is the divine goodness, that the
means

means of reformation are still provided; if offenders, with contrition, humility, and penitence, will make use of them. Devout earnest prayer, with sincere repentance, offered up to God, by faith in Jesus Christ, we are warranted from scripture to depend upon, as the only certain way to pardon and acceptance. As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather he should repent and live. The same authority assures us, that there is joy in heaven over a sinner that repenteth. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. These declarations are full of grace and mercy, invitation and encouragement, founded in goodness, and more permanent than a rock of adamant. By implication, and just inference, we must conclude, that the means and power of repentance are lodged in the hands of sinners, and that they will be responsible for neglecting them. As all animal passions grow stronger by indulgence, so they will, if not checked and restrained, gain the ascendant in the human heart,
and

and subjugate the will to their tyrannic sway. It is therefore the interest of every one, to be upon his guard against the encroachments of his passions, to keep them under the authority and controul of reason and conscience.

As objects of sense make the first impression upon the mind, so consequently there is in all men a predilection in favor of animal pleasures, which being seconded by evil example, bad education, and prevailing custom, no wonder that whatever counteracts sensual pleasure and animal gratification, should meet with continual disgust and resentment. Hence naturally arise extenuating pleas, and subtle excuses, for vicious indulgences, for irregular passions and selfish pursuits, and all criminal excesses. Will not this fairly account for the general depravity of mankind, and the prevailing corruption of human nature, without loading our first parents with the guilt of their posterity, and imputing to one offence that deluge of evils, which, from age to age, has overspread the world. The language of scripture is very different. And if we receive it as the revealed will of God, we must believe, that he is no respecter of persons, but in

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every

every nation, he who fears him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.

THOUGH the power of volition is coeval with human nature, yet the disposition, inclination, or propensity of the will to moral actions, is a subsequent acquisition, and depends upon that course of action, good or bad, in which the agent voluntarily engages. If this view of human nature be just, if it is founded in the nature of things, and evinced by experience and observation; if the disposition of the will constitute the morality of the action, then it necessarily follows, that he who stops his ear against the voice of truth, and obstinately persists in vice, will feel a propensity in his mind to evil, and hatred to good. But that man who adheres to the instructions of wisdom, and best obeys the commands of God, will be most virtuous, and approach the nearest to his Divine Master, in celestial beauty, dignity, and glory.

THOUGH man is a free agent, and wills freely what is in his mind to do, yet it does not thence follow, that he can execute all his purposes, or that he is not criminal, when only overt actions evince the depravity of his heart. Neither do all those acts, which prove hurtful to
society,

society, and offensive to morality, always indicate an evil disposition of mind ; because in the former case, fear, or some superior power, may prevent him carrying into execution very pernicious and diabolical inclinations ; and in the latter case, invincible error, or compulsion, operating on a timid disposition, may induce the agent to do, what he would otherwise willingly avoid.

As the springs of human action frequently lie very deep, and receive a tincture from the soil, through which they run, it is difficult to judge, with precision and certainty, what degree of virtue or vice belongs to men's actions. Though there is no better rule than to judge of the tree by its fruit, yet where men disguise their actions, with art and cunning, to gain applause ; or when by early prejudices they adopt erroneous principles for true ones, there it must be very difficult to develop the nature of their actions, respecting the degree of criminality. However, it is the part of candor always to hope the best, and incline to the most favorable opinion of men's actions, and to make all kind allowances for the errors and failings incident to human nature, and from which the best of men are not exempt.

T H O U G H T S

O N

O R I G I N A L S I N.

BY the doctrine of original sin, men are led to exculpate themselves, and to throw the blame of all their evil dispositions, upon their first progenitors; but as this does not appear to be a scripture doctrine, notwithstanding the bold assertions of its fallible abettors, so there is no necessity to adopt it, into our christian creed. The arguments in favor of it, drawn from the consideration of men's universal depravity, are by no means conclusive. Stronger reasons militate against them, and therefore ought to have the preference.

WHOEVER will carefully advert to the nature and circumstances of mankind, must observe, that in early life, when

when under the guardianship of others, impressions are made upon the minds of youth, by example and instruction, which, whether good or bad, grow stronger by time, and strike such deep root, as can scarce ever be eradicated, except when some passion is greatly offended, or some temporal interest comes in the way. It is likewise observable, that the passions, those elements of life, are always very solicitous for indulgence, and become too strong for controul, if not restrained by fear, and well disciplined betimes; though they are all of considerable service, when kept under strict servitude; yet when suffered to bear sway, like torrents overflowing their banks, all is confusion, disorder, and ruin. To the despotism of the passions, the most dreadful calamities of human life may be fairly and truly attributed, and not to any original bias, or natural propensity in the heart, to evil.

It is the regular course and constant process of nature, that every plant should grow from its proper seed, and every animated being produce its like. It is no less the established law of nature, or rather the God of nature, that the complexion and temper of the human mind, should

should depend upon such a series and course of moral actions, as are not owing to restraint or compulsion, but choice and freedom. Though a pious education and good example are invaluable privileges, as incentives to virtue, and favorable to the forming good habits, yet unless the will concur, and voluntary good actions ensue, it had been much better for such a man, never to have had such advantages. Every step in the path of duty, advances men in the christian life, and tends not only to improve their virtue, but to facilitate the practice of it. On the other hand, every wilful act of injustice, ingratitude, inhumanity, and violence, make way for a more easy repetition, and sink the agent deeper in guilt and danger.—However careless and indifferent men may be about the happiness of their souls, it is a very serious and important concern, because there is no other alternative than this, either they must be qualified for a state of social endless bliss, by habits of virtue, or perish everlastingly. There can be no doubt, but that all gracious allowances will be made, for the difficulties and dangers, the ignorance and weakness, the early prejudices and evil examples,

examples, to which men in different stations are exposed, and every reasonable aid and assistance will be afforded; for nothing can be more certain, than that the judge of all the earth will do right.

IF the mind of man is naturally depraved, and hostile to virtue, from his infancy, how can it be accounted for, that children, before they are seduced by wicked companions, or are tempted by some prospect of advantage, will seldom commit cruelty, act fraudulently, or violate truth? Had original sin, like a dead weight, hung upon human nature, it must there have appeared most conspicuous, where nature acted in full power, and met with the least obstruction, in its operations. Would but men attend, to what our Lord himself expressly declares on this subject, one would think, that no sincere christian could any longer maintain, and defend, so erroneous an opinion of fallible men; the words referred to are these; men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; which plainly intimate, that the love of darkness is the consequence of evil actions. Our Lord does not so much as hint at any original taint, or depravity

depravity of will, but that the disposition of the heart is derived from men's actions. Does not our Lord speak of little children, as the very patterns of innocence, when he tells his disciples, that of such is the kingdom of heaven. If we believe the apostle Paul, we must agree, that men who are not favored with the explicit commands of God, expressed in his law, can yet by nature do what the law requires; Rom. ii. 14. Not the hearers of the law are justified before God, but the doers.

THE universality of pride is perhaps the strongest argument, that can be produced in favor of this doctrine of original sin; and yet there seems a fair way of accounting for its production, without charging it upon Adam's transgression.

IT is obvious to every considerate mind, that there is in man, a strong passion for fame, an anxious desire of applause and esteem; and that this desire, like an elastic spring, is always pressing to action. It is further to be observed, that this, like other blind passions, is often employed in dishonorable, as well as honorable service. When our companions and friends are men of strict virtue, it is a strong incentive to right
action;

action; but when our connexions are with men of loose abandoned principles, we easily slide into their manners, adopt their principles, and emulate their vices, in expectation of their praise. Now as men always chuse the easiest way to accomplish their designs, so in gratifying this universal passion, they seldom are so scrupulous, as to examine into the justice of their pretensions, but receive, with avidity, all the applause which they can obtain, right or wrong. By this means men over-rate their own deserts, swell with imaginary importance, and can ill brook any opposition to their illegitimate merit. Hence we may conclude, that every one feels in himself a continual temptation, to think better of himself than he deserves, and is commonly offended, if others do not think so too. When men have not acquired a real love to truth and justice, by a steady practice of those virtues, they will easily be seduced by flattery, to procure esteem and honor, by art and cunning. We find but few so strictly honest, as to reject praise which they do not deserve, when their demerit is only known to themselves. Thus, I presume, we may fairly account for that inroad, which pride

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makes

makes into the human heart, and the universality of its spread. There seem to be but few human actions, performed in the eye of the world, but what this passion of emulation has some concern in; every learned debate, every trial of skill, nay more, even the gifts of nature, such as beauty, strength, and courage, and also, titles, and employments, set this active principle in motion, and countenance the above opinion.—[Emulation, like other principles of involuntary motion, is useful, or hurtful, just as it is managed; if pointed properly, judiciously, and wisely, it then impels to noble, generous, and good actions; but if the example, and influence of associates and friends are in favor of ostentation, sensuality, and flattery, emulation then degenerates into pride, and inflames the mind with wild ambition, and a feverish thirst for despotic sway.] If all Adam's posterity are tainted with his guilt, (as a polluted cask communicates its impurities to its contents) how can the advocates for this doctrine account, for our Lord's escaping the infection. He called himself the Son of man, partook of man's nature, and was in all points tempted as we are, yet immaculate, and pure.

Deep

Deep rooted prejudices, especially religious ones, are extremely hard to eradicate: It was so in our Saviour's time. The Jewish zealots were so tenacious of their established prejudices, that nothing less than miracles could prevail with them, to give them up. Nor would even miracles produce that effect with any, but sincere well-disposed people. Such is the rancorous spirit of blind enthusiastic zeal, that both priest and laity, when supported by the civil power, never fail to persecute and oppress all those, who cannot see religious matters, in the same light as they do. And such is their antichristian malice, and resentment, that besides hard names, and illiberal abuse, some go so far, as to thunder out church vengeance, excommunication, and everlasting execration. The sanguinary sons of ecclesiastical tyranny make religion their whetstone, on which they sharpen the bloody knife of persecution, to butcher the innocent flock of the great Shepherd of souls.

O N

R E L I G I O U S

E S T A B L I S H M E N T S.

AS humble fervent prayer is the best means to attain scripture-knowledge, so confidence in human creeds, is the high road to confusion and error, treason to the state of christianity, and a violation of its sacred laws. The clear and express command of the christian Lawgiver is, to call no man master upon earth; we are not to lord it over one another, but to love as brethren. The way to pre-eminence in the christian church can no way be obtained, but by humility, and becoming the servant of all, quite contrary to the maxims of the world, and ecclesiastical policy. The history of past ages exhibits such a bloody map, of cruel persecution

secution and tyranny, whenever ecclesiastical power hath taken the lead, that nothing could demonstrate more fully, the propriety of our Lord's injunction to his servants, or afford plainer marks of the true spirit of antichrist. By the lust of power, and this domineering spirit (instead of the gospel of peace, spreading its salutary influence over the whole habitable globe) cloudy controversy, unintelligible doctrines, human inventions, and absurd opinions, have so prevailed, and spread their baneful influence, as to impede the progress of genuine christianity, and obscure its native beauty and excellence. Under the banners of tyrannical zealots, what a deluge of corruption hath found its way into the church of Christ, where it has been accumulating from age to age; which would have been washed away of itself, if human authority had not unhappily interposed, and prevented from sinking into oblivion, the noxious dregs of foul superstition, and established error. Strong and early prejudices are at no time easy to eradicate, especially when countenanced by venerable antiquity, popular opinion, and established human authority. But for weak fallible men,
to

to assume a right of pre-eminence and authority over their brethren, their equals in the church of Christ, (without producing any credentials to support their pretensions) is the height of insolence, a bold invasion of the sacred prerogative of Christ, and directly contrary to his command. Such men, however dignified with titles, popular talents, learning, and temporal power, must assuredly render a true account of all their proceedings, and will find no shelter from that dreadful storm of vengeance, which awaits such daring perfidy, such bold presumption, and sacrilegious criminality.

As the spirit of the world and the spirit of christianity, are incompatible, so it is impossible to serve two masters. Condescension, meekness, brotherly love, and charity, are the characteristics of Christ's servants ; on the contrary, domination, intolerance, and persecution, are the evident signatures of the spirit of antichrist. The true spirit of christianity is benevolence, peace, righteousness, charity, meekness, and brotherly love.

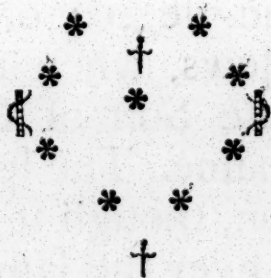
All such religious principles, as cannot stand without the aid of worldly emoluments and coercive power, (which
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like the walls of old cathedrals require buttresses to support them) can never justly claim any alliance with christianity, or originate from that Divine Being, whose service is perfect freedom. Fines and penalties, racks and tortures, ecclesiastical preferments and fat benefices, may establish absurd tenets, and propagate error, but were never known, to convince the judgment, and convey truth to the understandings, and hearts of men.

LET any impartial person take a view of all the religious establishments now in the world, and then declare whether he does not think, that the same spirit of contention, for modes of faith, for forms and ceremonies, would again break out (if countenanced by the civil power) with the same degree of violence, as amongst the Jews, when they crucified the immaculate Son of God, and put him to open shame. The spirit of bigotry and persecution, though it lies concealed for a time, is ever the same destructive, bloody-minded Fiend. Whoever hath recourse to coercive means, to acts of hostility, to fines or imprisonment, in order to propagate his religious principles, gives convincing testimony, that he
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64 ON RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS.

is not actuated by the spirit of christianity, but that of the world. If any one, by virtue of his learning and temporal power, will plead a right, to exercise authority over the consciences of those, who happen to be within his influence; for the same reason, other learned men may claim the same right, and what direful consequences would ensue? even all manner of spiritual tyranny, blind bigotry, flaming zeal, and persecution. He who assumes authority over his brother's conscience, contradicts the injunctions of the gospel.



ADVICE

P A R T II.

A D V I C E
T O A
S O N.

MY DEAR SON,

AS you are now arrived at those years, which give you a right, to the free use and exercise of your own judgment, so, I hope, you will proceed therein with caution and diffidence, and being warned by the miscarriages of others, strenuously endeavour to avoid their follies and vices. Reject the counsel of profane men, and imitate the best examples. Spare no pains in emulating their virtuous actions, which spread a glory round them, and attract the love,
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esteem, and friendship, of every good being in the universe.

To this purpose, I desire you will listen, with close attention, to the advice of one, who can have no views, but for your present and future welfare. Be careful that no partial consideration, no sordid interest, no momentary pleasure, ever bribe your judgment, or warp it from the straight line of truth. Be fully determined in your own mind, always to maintain your integrity, and a conscientious regard to that duty, which you owe both to God, and man. Never be afraid of the name of enthusiast, nor ashamed of your christian profession. Expect to meet with reproach, but be careful not to deserve it. Remember, that the friendship of the world is incompatible with christian fidelity. Though a strict adherence to truth may sometimes expose you to inconvenience, yet be assured, that every sacrifice you make on that account, stores up pleasure for futurity, and will be amply rewarded. However inconsistent with the wisdom of the world, the love of truth, and a steady adherence to it, will secure you from many great evils, and procure you inestimable advantages. Hence you will
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be led to suspend your judgment in all dubious cases, consequently you will avoid a great deal of contention, and dangerous error; hence you will strictly examine into the springs and motives of your own actions, and condemn, or approve, according to evidence. You will not take education-principles upon trust, but bring them to the test of reason, and revelation, and discard readily whatever will not stand the severest scrutiny.

WHEN your veracity is well known and established, then you will be esteemed fitly qualified for any important trust, or confidence, within the limits of your capacity. Neither will you take offence, if your powers of action confine your sphere of usefulness, to a small circle. There is something so base, so disingenuous, in the character of a liar, that the most execrable being in the universe is the reputed father of all such. Notwithstanding the great pretences, which men of all ranks make to integrity and honesty, and the offence which a suggestion to the contrary occasions, yet experience obligeth us to conclude, that it is rare and uncommon to meet with a man of strict veracity, honesty, and integrity; one who would willingly forego

any sinister advantage, any sensual gratification, rather than invade the rights of others, or violate his own conscience.

My next advice is, that you should be very careful how you form your connexions. Be not hasty in making friendships, nor trust to specious appearances. The world is full of flattery, deception, and error. Mankind in general are too selfish, too opinionated, too much the slaves of passion, to be capable of so generous a principle, as cordial friendship. You may meet with many, who can expatiate very agreeably upon the charms and virtue of friendship, on the advantages and felicity of mutual confidence, and unreserved communication of the secret sentiments of the heart; who, at the same time, mean only to display their own talents, or to insinuate themselves into the confidence of the credulous, and gull the unexperienced. It is no uncommon thing for the artful and cunning, to steal into the affections and confidence of youth, by strong protestations of sincerity, and making profession of an open, generous disposition, disdaining all timid reserve and mean suspicion; by which means, unexperienced innocence is often betrayed,

trayed, their good nature shocked, and specious villainy goes off in triumph. But be not you, my Son, so fatally deceived. Before you repose great confidence in any person, see that he has the fear of God before his eyes; be sure that he is a conscientious man; or you can have no security, that he will not deceive you. When, by clear and strong proof, you know a man to be honest, value him beyond the rich mines of Potosi, and bind him to your heart with hoops of steel. As a daily memento, inscribe over your door, in golden capitals, this instructive observation of Solomon's; "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools will be destroyed." Mankind in general have their manners formed, and moulded, by the companions of their choice, or by accidental associates. It must be of vast importance then, to shun and avoid the company of profane, debauched men, and to associate with the pious and good. Let not the difficulty of finding such valuable men, as you wish for your companions, discourage you in the way of integrity. Such is the effect, and acknowledged influence, which the members of society have

have upon one another; such the similarity of manners, and objects of pursuit, in the various classes and orders of men, that it is a well known proverb, That a man is known by his company.

THERE is another essential ingredient to your happiness, which I would earnestly recommend to you, and that is pure, unaffected humility, which is not to be attained by a transient wish, or by a faint desire; but being a virtue of high estimation, it deserves your greatest solicitude, to acquire it. Like ballast in a ship, it will keep your mind steady in the storms of life, and like the Sun on the face of nature, it will shed a lustre on all your actions, and invigorate every plant of virtue. By this virtue of humility, the mind is properly fitted for the reception of divine influence, which gives success to our best efforts of improvement. On the contrary, the mind is poisoned by pride, and flattery; it is the nature of vanity, and self-conceit, to shut the door against improvement, and divine instruction. If you desire the favor of heaven, and the esteem and love of all wise and good beings, you will cultivate humility, with the greatest care, and welcome even affliction,

tion, if conducive to this end. The time is coming, when all worldly grandeur, riches, and power (compared with humility) will be as feathers in the scale, or as the faint glimmering of a glow-worm, to the meridian brightness of the Sun.

WHAT is usually called pleasure, when unlicensed by divine authority, or surreptitiously obtained, loses its exhilarating nature, and turns to corrosive poison. The bold assassin, or felonious thief, who steals his neighbour's property, is not half so bad a pest to community, as the man who gives himself up to sensuality, and vicious indulgence; who scruples not to debauch your daughter, or seduce your wife; who tramples upon the most valuable rights of society, exults in his success, and glories in his shame. Were it possible for such a man to insure to himself a Nabob's fortune, princely power, an athletic constitution, and uninterrupted health, for a series of years together; and during that time, to revel in wanton sports, to indulge himself with women and wine, to the utmost of his carnal wishes; however envied by the slaves of libidinous passion, all good men would
blush

blush at the depravity, and lament the defection. Is there, my Son, so much as one good being in the universe, who could make a friend of such a man? Is there any thing in such a character amiable, commendable, or useful? Is there the least foundation for trust, confidence, or esteem? Where a selfish spirit predominates, pervades every action, and bounds his desires, that man forfeits all social regard, and becomes disqualified for all manly, rational, and urbanical happiness.

CAN men cancel their obligations to justice, temperance, chastity, and purity, by acts of rebellion, and by obstinate selfishness. The experience of all ages informs us of the great danger of pleasure's intoxicating cup; from her forbidden fruit, temptation draws a spirit of so subtle, potent, and inebriating a nature, as debilitates the mental powers, alienates the heart from God, and disqualifies it for heaven; like false friendship, while it mantles in the eye, it stabs to the heart. When criminal pleasures spread their syren charms, and court compliance, you, my Son, must take the alarm, and instantly fly from the danger. To parly with treachery is too
hazard.

hazardous, and conscious weakness forbids the encounter. Remember your obligations to that Being, whose you are, and whom you ought to serve; to whom you are indebted for all you enjoy, or can reasonably hope for. Think of the sharp sting of an offended conscience, and what a dreadful thing it is to incur the displeasure of the greatest, and best of Beings! In all trials look up to heaven, to invigorate your resolutions, and strengthen your religious principles; let it be your daily prayer, to be kept from fatal temptations, and cultivate in your mind, a filial fear of offending God. Think it not hard, to regulate your desires, by the standard of truth and righteousness, or to deny yourself such indulgencies, as manifestly tend to enslave the soul, and destroy its peace.

CONSIDER well the honor, and privilege, of having God for your Father, his wisdom for your guide, and his power for your protection. Never forsake the plain rule of duty. If any force of argument is to be derived from experience, there is accumulated evidence, in favor of integrity; search all ages, and you shall not find one person, who ever regretted his being wise and good, who ever repented his fidelity and obedience to his Maker.

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F A T H E R A N D S O N.

Father.

AS your little bark is just launching into a wide tumultuous sea, where you must expect rough storms and threatening tempests, as well as prosperous gales and chearful sunshine, (so that you will need every help to steer your course with safety) permit me to be your pilot, your confidant, and bosom friend. Open freely the secret recesses of your heart, that I may better know how to administer assistance. This request, be assured, arises solely from a desire to advance your welfare. My longer experience in active life, and more frequent opportunities of observing men and things, may enable me to
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render you some signal service, in your voyage through life.

Son. HONORED Sir; conscious of my danger, I embrace your kind offer, with alacrity and thankfulness; and I hope that you will have the pleasure, of seeing your generous concern for my happiness, crowned with success. As I see every thing smile, and look gay around me, I freely confess, that my strongest propensity is to pleasure; and as this ardent desire is, I presume, constitutional, so I conclude, there cannot be any thing wrong, or criminal, in the indulgence.

Father. NATURE no doubt hath her stores of pleasure, in great abundance, for the entertainment of such minds, as are prepared for them. But the pleasure which engages your attention, and charms you so much, seems to be altogether of the animal sensual kind; and no wonder; because objects of sense make the first impression, and thereby occasion a predilection in their favor. Amongst all who have never yet tasted the sublime pleasures, which philosophy and wisdom yield unto their votaries. How far that neglect is chargeable upon you, or those about you, or upon both,

we will not now consider; but proceed to enquire, whether you think yourself at liberty, when any passion is excited, to exclude all other considerations, but those of pleasure, gratification, and indulgence.

Do you imagine, that you may, without any damage to yourself or others, give way to the impetuosity of your passions, because you find yourself so inclined? or do you imagine, that you have no command, or controlling power, over them?—

Son. No Sir, that is not my idea. I apprehend, that I have some power, and do not intend to become a slave to my passions, but only to indulge them so far, as is consistent with my health, ease, and reputation.

Father. VERY well; whenever then the care of your health, ease, &c. come in competition, you think it would be right to restrain inclination, check sensual indulgencies, and lay an embargo upon your passions.

Son. YES Sir, I do. But how far it would be in my power, to follow my judgment. and act right, when objects of pleasure spread their charms before me, and enflame desire, to this I must demur,

demur, in making any decision. From the little experience I have had of my own power and resolution, I am convinced, that, in times of danger, there is no certain dependance to be made on my own strength, having frequently observed, that my escapes from danger, into which my passions led me, were not owing to firmness and resolution of mind, but to some other cause happily provided for my escape, and mostly to the principle of fear.

Father. So then, I find, you disclaim all merit, in the government or regulation of your passions, and frankly renounce self-confidence, when danger is near.

Son. INDEED I do; and whatever censure, or ridicule, I incur, I welcome fear with all my heart, whenever it is the means of safety, and no better principle is at hand, to shield me from threatening mischief.

Father. I am glad to hear so candid a confession; it is a good sign, when youth are modest and diffident; by that means they escape many evils, which the rash and presumptuous rush into. They become likewise the care of those good beings, who (though invisible) are always
ready

ready to do kind offices, to all proper objects. There is something so amiable and engaging in modest diffidence, that no benevolent being could withhold any needful help, which was in his power to give. Under the fallacious appearance of heroic courage and intrepid magnanimity, what numbers do we see, continually involving themselves in inextricable difficulties, and exposing themselves to suffering in the very vortex of human calamities? and all this in defiance of all the loud warnings and remonstrances, repeatedly echoed through every age, and every quarter of the world. But, my Son, have you counted the cost of adopting so low a motive, as fear for your guard, against danger from the passions. Can you stand the shock of ridicule, and be superior to a witty jest, and pointed sarcasm, from your convivial companions?

Son. THOUGH I cannot pretend to say, what inconveniencies and difficulties I may meet with, in the unfrequented road of humble diffidence; yet I hope, by divine assistance, to carry my resolutions of integrity into execution; and that whatever sacrifice I make on that account, the loss will be amply made

made up, in pleasures of a more noble and exalted nature.

Father. PRAY what foundation do you build such high expectations upon?

Son. UPON the testimony of all wise and good men, in every age of the world, who have made the experiment.

Father. BUT how can you be sure, that they speak the truth, and do not deceive and impose upon you?

Son. BECAUSE no conscientious good man can deliberately tell a lye; it is inconsistent with integrity, and can no more proceed from the tongue of a good man, than darkness from the sun. If I am an enthusiast in any thing, it is, in the love of truth; and the more I contemplate its great use and excellency, the stronger I feel its divine energy.

Father. BE assured, my Son, that you cannot esteem truth too much, nor set too high a value, on so divine a principle of action. It lies at the foundation of all wisdom and goodness, and should on no pretence whatever be given up. He who allows himself to shuffle, falsify, and impose upon the credulity and ignorance of others, weakens the strongest nerve, and firmest band, of all public and private faith and confidence.

Son.

Son. I know people differ much in opinion on this subject. There are many of great character, who think it no crime to say one thing, and mean another; to say what is false to those, who, they think, have no right to truth, or where the knowledge of the truth would probably do them harm.

Father. If you desire to enjoy the amiable character of a man of inflexible integrity, and strict veracity; one of whose word dependance may rest, as on a rock of adamant, you must maintain an inviolable attachment to this illustrious virtue, and like the Roman Regulus esteem death the lesser sacrifice.

Son. PRAY, Sir, does not such an adherence to truth border upon romantic extravagance, ignorance, and weakness?

Father. No, my Son; whatever the world may think, be assured, that such are the solid advantages of this conduct, to the person's own mind, who thus tenaciously adheres to truth at all times, that it becomes the means, and efficient cause, of his love to it. Of such vast importance is this slighted virtue, that without its aid, the very foundations would fail of that faith and trust, which are essentially necessary in our intercourse
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with men—and also with the Divine Majesty of heaven itself.

TRUTH is immutable in its nature, and of universal benefit; without whose seal no record is valid, no intelligence credible, no confidence safe, nor any testimonials of past or present transactions of any weight or authenticity. If such a veneration for truth, such a sacred regard to its obligations, took place in the world, as never to admit of any deviation whatsoever, all occasion of doubt and mistrust would be cut off, and a firm and steady confidence, in the declarations of one another, would be mutually established.

DIALOGUE II.

PRAY, Sir, what do you take to be the first and great concern of life?

Father. THE first concern is to provide for the body, which being the receptacle, or residence of the soul, demands an early attention; but that does by no means infer superiority, any more than the creation of the world makes

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the earth superior to its inhabitants. But the great and momentous business of human life is to become good, *i. e.* to grow into the image of our Maker.

Son. But how can such poor frail sinful creatures, as we are, ever hope to attain such perfection? can that be the duty and great business of life, which seems to lie beyond the reach, and extent, of human capacity? Can dust and ashes assume the splendor of the sun, or weak erring mortals mount, as with eagle's wings, towards heaven, and rival angels, in glory and dignity?

Father. HOWEVER difficult this may at first appear, you may be very certain, that nothing is commanded, or required of you, by your heavenly Father, but what is for your own good, and for the performance of which, he has furnished you with ample means and sufficient help.

Son. BUT how can I attain to a certain knowledge of my duty, and that what is declared to be the will of God, is really such? the opinions of men, on this subject, being very different, confused, and almost irreconcilable.

Father. IT is very true, that the religious opinions of men are widely different,

ferent, discordant, and often inconsistent with one another; and consequently there will be found intermixed a great deal of error; which, when supported by civil and ecclesiastical power, never fails to produce mental darkness, oppression, and contentions. But you must never look for pure unadulterated christianity, in the perplexed controversies, and agitated disputations of passionate men, be their abilities, learning, or stations ever so distinguished. Men never search for pearls in a storm. Your safest way is, to adopt into your creed, what all parties agree in, and never to admit any tenet, which clashes with the clear, and plain rules, of morality. Read the sacred book with attention, as free as possible from pre-possessions, education, principles, and a regard to human authority. In points of difficulty, suspend your judgment, or make use of the plain easy texts of scripture, to explain and elucidate those, which are more difficult to be understood. Be always modest and diffident of your own judgment. but firm and tenacious of what reason and conscience dictate to be true. Guard particularly against pride, which always misleads the judgment, and disposes men

to think better of themselves than they deserve, and are of course much offended with others, who do not think so too. This is not only error, but crime.

Son. Is pride from nature, or is it acquired?

Father. NOT from nature, you may be assured. From the Creator's hands, nothing impure or immoral ever issued; but from an ill directed emulation, insincerity, flattery, and bad education, does this pernicious principle rise. Pride is sown in the cradle, fostered in the nursery, and ripened to maturity by example, indulgence, and luxury. Tho' emulation is a useful laudable principle; though the love of applause, like parental affection, is constitutional; yet if youth see fine talents prostituted to sordid selfish purposes, and at the same time recommended to their imitation, by all the varnish of art, the glitter and swellings of pomp and vain ambition; I say, it is not to be wondered at, if inexperienced youth catch the infection, and instead of rising to renown, in the list of fame, they sink with their leaders into reproach and infamy.

Son. IF such be the condition of mankind, how is it possible to steer clear of danger,

danger, and escape shipwreck in the hazardous voyage of human life? Is there no sure means of safety?

Father. YES, my Son; there certainly is ample sufficient help at hand, if you properly apply for it; the means are already in your power, and it rests with you, to make the right use of them.

Son. PRAY, Sir, what are they? surely the application must be attended with great difficulty, or we should not hear so many complaints, of the evils and miseries of our fellow-creatures.

Father. THESE great and formidable difficulties are no other, than sincere humility, and fervent prayer; grateful praise for past and present mercies; unfeigned contrition for your numerous offences; supplication for wisdom and all suitable help, in every time of need; presenting all in the name, and through the mediation of the appointed Saviour of mankind. He who thinks these too hard conditions for flesh and blood, is most unworthy the honor and privileges annexed. Is it not decent, fit, and reasonable, that such weak, erring, sinful creatures as we are, should maintain upon our minds, such a sense of our follies and vices, as tend to stifle, and
kill,

kill, every emotion to vanity and pride? Is it, in any respect, unbecoming in the youngest sons of God, to accept his offered pardon and favor, on his own terms; terms manifestly calculated, to restore his lost image to our souls, and to exalt us to glory, and eternal happiness? Sure the liberty of approaching the throne of heaven, is no slight honor, no mean privilege?

Son. BUT what need of all this? could not such a temper have been given at first, as would have always inclined us to virtuous and good actions; and such an understanding, as would have secured us from all those errors and mistakes, which we now see prove so fatal to mankind?

Father. THERE is no question to be made of any want of power, wisdom, or goodness, in the Deity. If he had so pleased, his creature, man, might have resembled the beasts of the field, by being always subject to the controul of instinctive powers. If he had so pleased, the mind of man, from constitutional biases, and irresistible propensity, might never have deviated a hair's breadth, from its destined line of direction. But if man had been possessed of no higher prin-

principle of action, than that of instinct, he could never have ranked with angelic beings, or recommended himself as now to the Divine favor, by a free and liberal course of obedience, from a sense of gratitude, and choice of right action. Under the controul of instinct, man could never have advanced, in the moral character, to any resemblance of his Creator. He could then never have expressed his gratitude to his Maker, in so free and amiable a manner, as now by voluntarily sacrificing the pleasures and enjoyments of life, to the dictates of reason and conscience. He could not then have been capable of acting to his fellow-creatures, in the high office of a delegate, or substitute of heaven, in exercises of benevolence and charity, in relieving indigence and distress, in forgiving injuries, and returning good for evil, and thereby rising, in the scale of perfection, to moral beauty, dignity, and honor. The affection which we bear to one, who parts with what is dear and valuable, to procure us any substantial good, uninfluenced by any sinister motive, is very different from that, which unites animals, and which is altogether instinctive.

Son.

Son. THOUGH it must be acknowledged, that generous acts of kindness beget love, esteem, and confidence; yet I don't see, how such a conduct can refine my nature, and make me godlike?—

Father. WE know nothing by intuition, but are capable of much knowledge by application, and study. The best lesson we can possibly learn, is the will of God. This is wisdom, this is understanding, and the direct path to all useful knowledge, to the love and practice of truth and righteousness, and by that means, of growing up to a perfect stature in Christ Jesus. It is impossible for you to obey the Divine commands, for any length of time, without loving them. Then Duty and interest become one; and your progress in piety, virtue, and holiness, will advance every day, more and more, till you are ripened for immortality, and qualified to join, with the blissful choir above, in songs of triumphant joy, and ardent praise, to him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Son. THOUGH I cannot accuse myself of any immoralities, nor think myself so bad, as many of my acquaintance; yet I don't find, that my love and hatred
follow

follow my judgment, and wait upon the reason and understanding of my mind.

Father. You are not to conclude, by outward appearances, that your neighbour is less virtuous than yourself. It is extremely difficult for you to investigate his circumstances, and draw the line of fair discrimination, betwixt his, and your own actions. If others had the same pious education, they might be far your superior in virtue, and piety. If you find, that your attachment to objects of sense, is too strong for your virtue, and that your duty is rather an incumbrance, than a pleasure, to you; if you are only solicitous to save appearances, and find in yourself no hungering and thirsting after righteousness, no love to God, nor desire to please him, you have the symptoms of death upon your soul, and are by no means qualified, for a state of blissful immortality. Be not deceived, in this important concern, for as you sow, you will assuredly reap. If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption; but if to the spirit, you will reap life everlasting.

Son. BUT what remedy is there for a mind distempered with sin, cold and indifferent to christian virtues, and en-

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tangled with the cares, and pleasures of the world?

Father. THE same which I told you of before, humility and prayer. Use the means in your power, and look up to heaven, to bless those means. It never yet entered your mind, of what great benefit fervent prayer is, when offered up upon the altar of the cross, with earnest solicitude, for divine pardon and acceptance. God hath graciously encouraged his youngest children, to approach his presence, with filial fear and chearful confidence, for every thing desirable, and really good for them. You must not expect to be compelled to speak truth, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God. Though we cannot, by any power of our own, change our affections, yet such is the established appointment of heaven, that no success in the field of harvest (after due cultivation) is so certain as this; that supreme love to God, and generous affection to our fellow-creatures, will grow up in the human breast, after diligent cultivation, by the practice of truth, justice, righteousness, and charity, in obedience to the Divine will.

Son.

Son. As I have not been used to think it possible for the affections, to be thus made to follow the understanding, so I must beg leave to consider this novel opinion, before I embrace it, though I must confess, that I do not, at present, discover any flaw in the argument.

Father. REMEMBER, that the virtues and vices of the heart, are no part of the constitution, and original frame of human nature, but the genuine effect of right or wrong actions, performed by rational free agents; who, in their early state of existence, are assisted by motives of hope and fear, and by friendly counsel and advice, till habits are confirmed, and the understanding, by exercise, is ripened into maturity. Spare no pains therefore, to contract good habits. Duty will then become both easy, and pleasant, and your temper by these means will meliorate, and refine, into some resemblance of the amiable temper, of your great Master, whose yoke will then be found easy, and his burden light.

Son. BUT is not all dependance on our own strength, like building upon the sand? are we not expressly told, that we are dead in trespasses and sins; that there is none that doeth good, no not

one; that by faith we are saved, and that not of ourselves it being the gift of God, and therefore we are incapable of helping ourselves?

Father. ADMITTING all this to be true, that the world is so degenerated; that mankind are so sunk in wickedness, as to be incapable of recovery, by any efforts of their own; then the greater is the Divine benignity, and condescension, in providing us a remedy, a sovereign balm, adequate to our depravity, and moral turpitude. This balm, this remedy, is no less than the blood of Christ, which he shed upon the Cross for our salvation. Not, as some have imagined, to appease divine wrath, and quench the kindled flame of vengeance, but to convince the world of sin, and by the most powerful example, to bring mankind to righteousness. Salvation is now proclaimed to all the children of men, through faith in the cross of Christ: this faith is likewise the gift of God; it is refused to none, who do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before him. This is to wash, and be clean; do this, and thou shalt live, is the language of sacred writ. Whoever thinks, that these terms of pardon and acceptance are hard,
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can have no relish for rational delights, grateful obedience, and godlike benevolence; and consequently, can have no just foundation to hope for eternal life. Though it is certain, that we have nothing to boast of, but much to make and keep us humble, we must not, under that pretence, think to excuse ourselves, from the use and exercise of those talents and means of grace, which are intrusted to our care, for the kind purpose of reformation and usefulness. Be assured, that the divine commands are all kindly suited to our abilities and circumstances, and are conducive both to our present and eternal welfare. If we recognize Christ for our Lord and Master, we must strive to imitate him, in his obedience and submission to the Divine will, and in his love to mankind. Hereby (saith our Lord) shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another. In short, without charity, or benevolence, though you had faith to remove mountains, it would signify nothing. You must not be easy, till you can say with truth, that you love your neighbour as yourself, and are ready to do good, even to those that hate you, and to pray for those, who despitefully use you, and persecute you.

Son. PRAY Sir, is such a conduct possible to any man of spirit and true courage? what is anger designed for, if we are not to resent injuries, and punish delinquents? he who tamely bears affronts, and passes by ill treatment with impunity, encourages and provokes offences.

Father. NOTWITHSTANDING common prevailing opinion, or the reproach of men, be assured this is both wise, and practicable. There is benevolence in the command, dignity in the action, and glory in the event. It is true, that till such time as you have taken some pains with yourself, and made some progress in self-denial, and a virtuous life, you will not experience any disposition of this kind in your heart. If you would be perfect, you must follow the advice of our Saviour, to the young man, and be willing to sell, or part, with all worldly advantages for his sake, or you cannot be his disciple. Riches, power, and honors, will never procure you an admission into heaven.

D I A L O G U E III.

C O N C E R N I N G

R E L I G I O N.

Son.

DEAR Sir, I should be glad to know your sentiments concerning religion. There is such clashing of opinions amongst the various professors, that I am bewildered and confounded with their contradictory schemes, and subtle distinctions, and quite at a loss where to fix, what to embrace, and what to reject.

Father. If you sincerely desire to know the Divine will, my Son, with an honest intention to do it, you must not look for it in the traditions, synods, counsels, hierarchies, and controverted opinions, of fallible men, but in the oracles of God, contained in the Bible.

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You must divest your mind of all prejudice and interested passions. If you aim at truth, you must pray devoutly for its sacred illumination; then you will go on with safety, and soon understand all that is necessary, both as a rule of faith and practice. Then you will not be anxious to know what is beyond the reach of your abilities, or what it is better for you to remain ignorant of. You will then find divine illumination breaking in upon your mind as you are able to bear it. Don't let sophists delude you, with the specious pretence of danger, in following your own judgment, when you have a divine revelation before you. There you are clearly instructed in all the great duties of life, relative to God, and your neighbour; and that on these two hang all the law and the prophets.

Son. If my whole duty as a christian is comprised in love to God and Man, and I feel, with regret, that I am deficient in these duties, what would you have me to do? I can no more command my own affections than my animal appetites of hunger and thirst. If love, like the movement of my limbs, depended upon volition, I should then most assuredly

assuredly adopt that noble passion, and exert it in its utmost vigour, agreeable to the precepts of the gospel.

Father. HOWEVER paradoxical the assertion may appear, I hope to convince you, that love is, with regard to the subject before us, absolutely in our own power, and dependent on our will, consequently the defect must be criminal.

Son. THIS I confess appears not only strange, but impossible; however I beg to know how you will solve this great difficulty.

Father. WE are very sensible, that we not only derive our being, but all the pleasures and enjoyments of life, from the liberality of our Creator. We know likewise, that we are weak, erroneous, offending creatures, yet graciously preserved, and surrounded with innumerable privileges, and benefits. Can we seriously think of the blessings of health, strength, refreshing balmy sleep, the continual supply of our daily returning wants, together with the sweet delights of friendship, domestic comforts, and rational pleasures of society, and not feel in our breast some glow of gratitude to the kind Author of all this good? under such an impression, and
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just sense of things, is it possible for you to remain cold and indifferent, or unsolicitous, to know, and do his will, from whose free bounty all those great benefits are derived? Don't they challenge your regard, and by sweet attraction almost compel you to love, adore, and worship the benevolent Donor? are you not hence led chearfully to obey his commands? Reason and revelation both recommend, and enjoin the constant practice of truth and righteousness, not from constraint, but willingly; the natural consequence of which is, to love those most, who most excel in the divine virtues; and therefore your warmest and highest degree of admiration and love will be directed to the most excellent and best of all Beings. Do but practice the christian virtues steadily and uniformly, and you will soon relish them, beyond any sensual delight. Then it will not be in your power to refuse loving all those, whose actions are regulated by the same principles. Thus, I hope, I have shewn you, that this affection of love may be fixed upon its proper object; that it is under your own direction and guidance; and that you may, if you please, love God supremely, and your neigh-

neighbour as yourself. No man can say, it is beyond his power, to speak truth, to be faithful, just, benevolent, and conscious of your own weakness, to pray for divine assistance.

Son. BUT are not hope and fear, rewards and punishments, the great springs of human actions.

Father. No doubt they are; and were kindly appointed to check and restrain vice, to encourage and quicken to duty; the perfection of which requires those auxiliary helps, under our present circumstances, exposed as we are to temptations from without and from within.

Son. BUT what is the reason that they fail of their proposed end? that they don't secure all men from vice, or prove effectual to lead them to happiness? Don't we see that their operation is every where faint and languid?

Father. IT is very true, that fear and hope have very little influence on mankind, with regard to a future state, because they have little or no belief in the divine promises or threatnings. The influence of example, and present gratifications of the passions, militate against it. Besides, till such time as you have acquired a real love to truth, by the

practice of it, you will find yourself indisposed to believe the communications of the will of heaven, unattended with terror and dismay. If you think yourself no further bound to regard truth, than you apprehend your interest is concerned, then you must allow, that others have the same liberty; and consequently, that the most solemn declaration even from the mouth of an angel is not to be regarded, if you apprehend he may innocently deceive you, or that truth may be dispensed with on particular occasions.

D I A L O G U E IV.

Son.

PRAY Sir, what is the great use and benefit of religion to mankind?

Father. THE design of all true religion is to bring men, by a course of obedience, to the will of God, to the truest enjoyment of the blessings of this life, and to perfect felicity in heaven;
Or,

Or, in other words, to induce mankind to practice truth, justice, righteousness and goodness, freely and universally, which as elementary ingredients of human happiness can never be dispensed with.

Son. WHAT! cannot the Almighty dispense his grace as he pleases, pardon whom he will, and in what manner he thinks proper?

Father. No doubt he can; but we may be very certain, that he will never act contrary to his own declarations, but always with consummate wisdom and perfect goodness. From what appears to us, every thing has been done for mankind, that is consistent with the honor of the divine attributes. The great, the universal plan of God's government requires all his subjects to be just, righteous, holy, and good to one another. When seduced by treachery, and falsehood, mercy intervened, and prevented that destruction to which disobedience had exposed our first parents. Early provision was graciously made for the restoration of all his posterity to forfeited life; yet in such a manner as shewed the divine displeasure against sin. At the same time, nothing could
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more strongly manifest God's love of truth, justice, and righteousness, than by sending from heaven his beloved Son, that august Personage, by whom the Father made the world, and to whom we may presume, on that account, its inhabitants were peculiarly dear. He was sent, I say, into this world, to convince the world of sin, to destroy the works of the devil, and, in our nature, to exemplify our duty, by a life of piety and holiness, humility and universal benevolence; instructing mankind by example, as well as precept, and confirming the whole, by that most astonishing proof of obedience and philanthropy, giving himself up a sacrifice upon the cross, for the salvation of sinners. Hence we learn, that self-denial, for the good of others, is a sacrifice well pleasing to the Father of mercies. Hence appears the propriety of God's highly exalting our Lord, and giving him a name above every name. His exemplary piety, meekness, and benevolence, shone most illustriously through his whole life upon earth, and was sufficient to characterize him the Son of God, though no prophetic writings, or miraculous works, had announced his divine mission.

Son.

Son. IF this be religion, where is the mystery of godliness: this is all easy to understand.

Father. THE mystery of godliness was Christ's coming in the flesh, which was not understood by Jews or Heathens, till certain prophecies concerning him were accomplished. There is, in the Christian religion, such native beauty and excellency, such compass of design, such glorious privileges, such extensive advantages, such animating prospects, and at the same time such simplicity, conciseness, and practicability, as not only render it superior to all other religions in the world, but mark it strongly to be of divine origin. At the same time, it must be acknowledged, that the oracles of truth are as a sealed book, an inexplicable mystery, to such men as are voluntary slaves to passion, and the dupes of their own pride and self-sufficiency.

Son. IF the duties of religion, if the law and the prophets, are all comprized in the love of God, and our neighbour; what is the reason, that most of the sermons we hear consist chiefly of illustrations, ingenious glosses, learned criticisms, and speculative opinions? when pathetic addresses to mens feelings, to
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their passions, might, by the oratory of the pulpit, rouse them from slumber, and almost compel them to reformation.

Father. OUR divines, like other men, are tenacious of old customs, and too eager of popularity, to hazard the loss of reputation, and incur censure. Besides, there are some who think too meanly of their hearers,—and others too well.—The former treat them as children, ever learning them the first rudiments of christianity; the latter seem to think, that their hearers (like themselves) only want to know what is right, in order to practice it. But, alas! men who are led into snares, into folly and vice, by their passions, must by their passions (if ever reformed) be led out of them too.

Son. PRAY Sir, what do you take to be the reason of so little appearance of the spirit of genuine christianity amongst its professors, notwithstanding the reasonableness of its doctrines, the clearness of its precepts, and the blessedness of its promises?

Father. I apprehend it is owing to infidelity, growing out of a frivolous education, effeminate manners, vicious examples, and abounding dissipation and pleasures; which, with united strength
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(like streams collected into one channel) bear down all before them, and lay waste that rich field of intellectual nature, which if duly cultivated, under the influence of a lively faith, would have produced a harvest of immortal fruit.

Son. If so many dangers croud the common path of life, can it be any wonder, that such multitudes make shipwreck of faith, and sink in the vortex of sensuality to everlasting ruin? but do you apprehend that there is no remedy for these evils?

Father. TROUBLES and afflictions are the ordinary means of counterbalancing the wrong bias, which the mind contracts by sensual indulgences; and far better it is for mankind, that such temporal evils should emancipate their minds from the tyranny of lusts and passions, than they continue slaves to such masters. But other means, gentle, pleasing, and amiable, are at hand, if men would but attend to them. These are sincere acts of gratitude, proceeding from the heart, expressed by ready obedience, and filial confidence, in the Father of our spirits, through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For a lively gratitude is the
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sweetest source of obedience, and a perpetual fountain of delightful entertainment. There is a noble and rational pleasure, resulting from all actions, (however arduous) which flow freely from a just sense of obligation. Who can contemplate the profusion of Divine goodness to the children of men, without the utmost thankfulness to the benevolent Donor? O, my Son; if you would begin heaven upon earth, cherish betimes this principle of gratitude in your heart. Call frequently to mind the riches of divine grace, and the multitude of divine mercies; consider, that they are all the free gifts of heaven; that these favors too you have forfeited—and you will find your love to God daily encreasing, and your solicitude to do his will.

Son. THOUGH this looks plausible in the eye of speculation, I fear, it is not so in practice. To renounce all the blooming promises of sensual indulgence, the charms of flattery, the enjoyments of luxury, and the intoxicating delights of ostentation, ambition, and power, require more philosophy than I can pretend to. Besides, the torrent of example, and practice of the world, are against it. Do we not see every one eager in pursuit
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of wealth, pleasure, or power ; and that all religious concerns, and a future state, are left to men of weak intellects, to the poor and indigent, to the bigot and enthusiast, to the afflicted and aged ?

Father. HOWEVER strong the stream of custom, and the false maxims of the world may run, in favor of criminal pleasures, and vicious indulgences ; however great the majority on the side of sensuality, and infidelity ; yet it is a most certain truth, an experienced fact, that the ways of wisdom, are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, and that godliness is great gain ; that no man ever yet repented of being just and honest, temperate and regular, pious and good ; But thousands, thousands of thousands, have lamented their departure from the straight line of truth, from rectitude and integrity ; and have lamented their obstinacy in vice ; stopping their ears against the voice of conscience and reason, and running with the multitude to do evil. Are men of this complexion to be envied ? can any one, in his senses, in the least, hesitate which path to take ; that which leads to destruction through animal gratifications, or that which leads, through a momentary self-denial, to im-

mortal glory. What a contrast is here! to rise to dignity, glory, and honor, by grateful obedience to our Creator, or sink to contempt, infamy, and ruin, by following the fashion of the world.

D I A L O G U E V.

O N T H E

P A S S I O N S.

Son.

YOU must excuse me, Sir, thinking with you, that love and hatred is in my own power, or that I can give them whatever direction reason recommends. Do we not see every day of our lives, that these passions sway the minds of men, without consulting their reason? like wild spontaneous trees, they grow without care or culture, consequently do not depend upon the will.

Father.

Father. You know, that every effect proceeds from some certain regular cause. Equivocal generation is an exploded doctrine. As in vegetables, every plant springs from its proper seed, so the passions of love and hatred are invariably excited, by their proper objects of apparent good, or evil. It is by too great an attention to objects of sense, and a criminal neglect of rational improvement, that sensual pleasures gain the ascendant over rational ones, and captivate the will, to animal indulgences. Then, whatever things administer most effectually to these pleasures, may be sure of having the largest share of their affections, attached to them. Passions follow their corresponding objects, as shadows do their substance. During the infant state, or minority of the understanding, man is but little more than a mere animal, subject to his passions, and under the guidance of those, to whom he is intrusted; by which means, his passions might receive a very advantageous cast, favorable to virtue, and beneficial to society. In youth there is a strong emulation, even from the cradle, to excel, and gain the esteem and approbation of all about them. How useful

ful this spring of action, if rightly directed? How easily might the virtues, and graces, be introduced into the minds of young persons, by this avenue, if proper care was taken? If a strict adherence to truth, justice, generosity, temperance, chastity, and purity, were made conditions of esteem and favor, it is not improbable, but youth would be as eager in emulating one another, in the shining paths of virtue, as in the common lists of fame, or in the trifling amusements, which now engage their attention, and bound their desires.

Son. If your proposition is founded in truth, their love and hatred are transferable to the highest bidder, like property in the public funds.

Father. To confirm your belief, let me put a case to you. Suppose two persons offered you some very considerable advantages, to take upon you their name, and enter into their connections, views, and measures. The first, spreads before your eyes all the pleasures and gay delights, which gratify the senses, exhilarate the spirits, and delight the imagination. The second, addresses your understanding, offers you pleasures of a different kind, of the highest estimation, sublime,

sublime, noble, and permanent, (besides a temperate use of the other) on condition, that you attend to the voice of wisdom, and adhere to the dictates of conscience. The early impressions made upon your animal nature, by objects of sense, give you a predilection, and bias, in their favor; and therefore it is very natural to expect, that you would accept the former proposal, preferable to the latter, and comply with the person, so ready to administer to your pleasures. Now in order to turn the stream of your affection, and transfer your love to the second person, your business is, to consider consequences; and to guard against delusion, ask yourself, whether the great promises of happiness, from animal gratifications, are ever made good. Do not all, who make the experiment, in a little time, cry out, they are deceived; and lament their disappointment, arraign their deceiver, and treat him as an impostor, who, by fallacious expectation, would tempt them to ruin? Let me advise you, to attend to the friend of virtue, and taste the pleasures which wisdom promises to all her votaries. Take the suffrages of all good men for your encouragement, and when you have fairly

fairly made the trial, then say, which of the two candidates most deserves your esteem.

Son. I do not doubt, but on a fair survey of the effects of vicious and virtuous actions, my judgment would be in favor of the latter. But I don't see, how that can bring over my affection, and love to virtue, and to all virtuous beings. When inclination is once fixed, and the mind strongly impressed in favor of any object, it is not easy, if possible, to give it a contrary bias, and eradicate its prepossessions.

Father. You cannot deny the possibility of such a change, because the fact is evinced every day. Where love once resided, and strongly too, there hatred has succeeded, equally strong. You are not to expect this change, from the love of vice to the love of virtue, to be instantaneous, but gradual. Your conviction of what is right, may be immediate; but where bad habits are to be subdued, and good ones introduced, time, care, labour, and watchfulness, are necessary. —You should never forget, that all your animal pleasures, all the delights of sense, are the free gifts of your Creator, to whose will, in the enjoyment of them, you

you ought carefully to attend. This, gratitude demands. Reason, revelation, and conscience, are at hand to assist you. Whatever pleasure you cannot enjoy with thanksgiving; deny yourself, as improper and unlawful; and such are all those obtained by fraud, and injustice; all that exceed the bounds of temperance, or obstruct any moral duty. By a temperate and wise use of the pleasures of sense, we are led to the love of God, as the giver of all, whose goodness, perpetually surrounds us, and calls for continual praise.

Son. If animal pleasures tend to excite gratitude and love, why are they distributed so sparingly, and not given to every one in an overflowing measure, or in an equal proportion?

Father. THOUGH every man has not an equal share, or such a degree as he may wish for; yet every one has sufficient to challenge acknowledgement, and thankfulness. And he who is ungrateful in little, will be so in much. If our gratitude go no further than words, it is of no consequence. To prove it genuine and sincere, we must act consistently, resign our wills to the divine pleasure, and cheerfully acquiesce in his

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determination and wisdom. If we may judge of the eligibility and benefit of riches, and elegance, and power, from the use made of them, by those who enjoy them in the greatest abundance, persons in inferior stations will have no cause to complain of their allotment, or to envy the situation of others; but on the contrary, to adore that providence, which disappointed their sanguine wishes, and confined them to a more humble sphere of life, to fewer superfluities, and less temptations.

ATTEND but carefully to the daily experience which you have of divine goodness, and let your actions express your gratitude and obedience; and then you cannot fail ardently to love God, because you will find yourself happy, far beyond all sensual delights, far above the envied heights of all earthly grandeur. The pure flame of love thus kindled will refine your thoughts, elevate your affections, and give you some foretaste of celestial joys. As it is the nature of love, to copy after the object beloved, so by imitating the divine perfections, you will, in the temper and complexion of your mind, grow into some resemblance of his moral character.

ter. Then, from your heart, you will, at all times practice truth, justice, righteousness, and goodness.

Son. IF this is the right road to happiness, and nothing required but what reason and conscience recommend, how is it, that there are so few to be met with, who have any real concern, about the dignity of moral character, the favor of God, and everlasting felicity?

Father. THE chief reason I apprehend to be this; men accustomed to arts of deception, lying, and flattery, to obtain some present good, or illicit pleasure, judging of the veracity of others by themselves, have no foundation for faith or confidence in any promise, or threatening, (come they from what quarter they may) if they militate with their present views of ambition or pleasure. To the generality of men, the obligations to truth, the sacred ties of veracity, are no better than cobwebs, or ropes of sand, to secure their promises, if any present interest interfere. This makes it impossible, that the divine commands should have any lasting effect on such men, to induce them to repentance. For if it is once admitted, that truth may be dispensed with by one person, why not in

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another?

another? and then what avail promises and threatnings?

Son. BUT Sir, is not divine grace free? is it not compared to the wind, that bloweth where it listeth? are we not told, that God turneth the hearts of princes, as rivers of water; that he hardened Pharaoh's heart, and who can resist his will?

Father. ALL this is very true, but nothing to your purpose, if your meaning is, that we are destitute of the means of obeying the divine commands, of speaking truth, and acting justly, by one another. Concerning Pharaoh, and the hearts of kings, being subject to divine controul, we may be well assured, that the evil actions of men which are the effects of irresistible power, will never be imputed to them, as criminal. The Judge of all the earth will do what is just, and right. He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humility and pride are dispositions of our own acquiring; effects, arising from the right or wrong use of powers, entrusted to our care. Is there the man living, who surveys his own conduct with any attention, but must be convinced of his own weakness, errors, and offences?

Son.

Son. IT must be acknowledged, that where meekness and humility appear to be the genuine temper and disposition of the mind, there is the fairest ground for internal peace, and external favor. Whence is it then, that we see so few people solicitous, to cultivate these dispositions in their hearts?

Father. Two opposite principles, can never subsist together. If the one is admitted, the other must be excluded. Hence we may conclude, that pride finding easy admission into the human breast, by means of selfishness, flattery, and disregard to truth, the contrary principle is considered in a false light, and represented as a mean contemptible motive of action, as repugnant to the ambition of a brave spirit, and a perpetual clog to great achievements. This, I apprehend, will account for the virtue of humility meeting with so much neglect in the world.

D I A L O G U E VI.

Son.

THOUGH I feel myself ambitious of rising in excellence of character, yet warned by the miscarriages of others ; I dare not follow implicitly their example ; therefore I should be obliged to you, for your opinion concerning the best object of pursuit, and the most probable means of succeeding.

Father. THE most noble object of ambition is, the favor of your Maker ; and the way to attain it, is obedience to his commands. By that (and by that only) you will rise to the summit of all human perfection ; even to such a temper and disposition of mind, as will always freely incline you to truth, to justice, and all righteousness. This being the unalterable established plan of divine government, you thence plainly see, that a moral temper, or good disposition

position of heart, was not born with you ; that it is no inheritable perfection ; no constitutional ingredient of human nature ; but a subsequent gift of divine grace, bestowed only on those, who act agreeably to their Creator's will. By this means, men are assimilated into the image of their Creator, become objects of his favor, and qualified for immortality.

Son. THEN sure, Sir, there must be some great difficulties in the way, or we should find the path of glory more frequented, and greater numbers speeding their flight to the regions of eternal bliss. The objects of sense, the pleasures and cares of the world, engage men's attention so much, that they have neither time, or inclination, to think of what will become of them hereafter.

Father. It is very true, that the terms of moral goodness require some discipline and self-denial ; some sacrifice of temporal pleasures ; they likewise demand some care and attention, watchfulness and persevering labour. It is the christian's warfare alone that leads to true glory. Under the banner of Christ, that great Leader and Captain, all should be volunteers ; cool in deliberation, firm in resolution, and warm in execu-

execution. The scene of action is temporary, but the triumph is eternal. Trained by exercise, discipline, and self-denial, the christian soldier has nothing to fear, being well assured of auxiliary aid from heaven, in every case of need. Tho' he despises the ridicule and scoffs of infidels, yet he is, at the same time, anxiously solicitous for their repentance and happiness ; not barely wishing, but labouring to promote the good of his fellow-creatures. What stinging remorse, what painful reflections, usually follow all acts of injustice, fraud, and illicit pleasures? But it is far otherwise with the man, who is virtuous and good. He feels within him no ill-boding fears, no painful retrospect, no consequential alarms, as to futurity ; all is serenity, peace, and joy. Conscious of his integrity, and of his willing though imperfect obedience, with filial confidence he relies upon divine goodness for pardon, favor, and acceptance, through the mediation of the great Captain of his salvation. This is that sweet peace, which passeth all understanding, and which the men of pleasure (as they are called) know nothing of.

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IT is painful to think, how many of our fellow-creatures (though capable of immortal glory, by a short course of grateful obedience to their Creator) accelerate their own destruction, by abusing his grace, and violating his laws.

Son. I CANNOT think, that the condition of mankind, is so deplorable, as you represent. Whatever errors men run into from weakness, example, and imitation. I apprehend, an equitable Judge will not charge to their account.

Father. T H O U G H early prejudices, bad examples, and erroneous principles, will, no doubt, have all candid allowances made for them, by a merciful Judge; yet what excuse can be offered for deliberate injustice, base ingratitude, insidious perfidy, obstinate ignorance, rank pride, and cruel oppression? against these offences, reason and conscience revolt, as hostile to society, and discordant to the harmony of the universe.

WITHOUT goodness of heart, there never can be any just foundation for pure, permanent happiness. Gratifying a passion, at the expence of moral obligations, may give us a momentary pleasure, (as revenge, violation of chastity,

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the success of a highwayman, &c.) but can never compensate for the crime, or counterbalance the guilt. Will any man pretend to happiness, who sets conscience at defiance? Is not the cool approbation of his own mind, necessary to inward peace and satisfaction? From what quarter can any man receive lasting comfort and joy, if he is void of sincerity, and guilt tarnish his soul?

D I A L O G U E VII.

Son.

IF goodness of heart be essential to man's happiness, then doubtless sufficient means must be given, to every man, for such an acquisition, or no man could be blamed for the want of it. But from the universal depravity which appears in the world, I am led to conclude, that few have the means of acquiring this disposition of heart.

Father.

Father. YOUR conclusion drawn from the universality of man's depravation is only opinion, and has no more reason to support it, than a felon pleading, in bar of condemnation, he had numbers on his side. The means, for obtaining this celestial temper, are clearly revealed, and amply provided for, in the sacred volume of inspiration. They are tendered to all, to the poor, as well as to the rich, without distinction or preference. Every one may take of the waters of life freely, and be blessed for ever. They are recommended by clear, unanswerable arguments; they are enforced by the strongest sanctions; and over and above all, this should awaken our attention, and fill our minds with wonder, gratitude and love, that they are exemplified in the character, life, and death, of the benevolent Jesus, the Redeemer and Judge of the World. If such amazing condescension, such divine philanthropy fail of producing, in the sons of men, suitable returns of gratitude and obedience, it must be their own fault, and not from any want of proper motives. They must take the consequence, and as they sow to the wind, they can expect only to reap the whirlwind.—

Wilful ignorance, obstinacy, and pride can have nothing to plead : and for involuntary errors, a merciful allowance will be made, as they appear to afford a just foundation for the exercise of divine compassion. Objects of sense and terrestrial enjoyments, engross so much of people's attention, as to leave, for religious duties, little more than a cold formal profession, even amongst those, who have not cast off the appearance of religion. What can we think of those professing christians, who look upon one day in seven, as a heavy tax upon their worldly affairs, amusements, and pleasures ? Nay, how many are there, who seem to think it a weariness, and lost time, to spend two or three hours, in the public worship of their Creator ? yet these men are called christians, and hope for salvation by Jesus Christ, though they take no pains to learn and do his will ; that is, they are willing to go to heaven, but will not sacrifice any earthly pleasure, to qualify themselves for that state of glory. They will take great pains to acquire the riches and honors of the world, the applause of mankind, and pleasures of sense ; but to acquire a good disposition, such as
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would render them amiable, in the sight of all good beings, seems none of their concern, though both their present and everlasting welfare depend upon it.

Son. I THINK, Sir, you bear a little too hard, upon those who happen to see things in a different light. Though the Mosaic law obliged the Jews to keep holy the sabbath-day, yet is this binding upon Christians? Does not the Apostle declare, that all days are alike to those, who think them so? why then should we make any distinction, and needlessly put a yoke upon ourselves?

Father. It is very certain, that we are not under the restraint of the ceremonial laws of Moses, but placed in such easy circumstances, as to act, if we will, with the utmost freedom. Such is the constitution of things, that the less restraint there is upon our good actions, the more satisfaction and pleasure they yield to ourselves in the performance, and the greater is their moral beauty, in the eyes of all rational beings. If therefore there is nothing fit and reasonable in the nature of things, that man should, from a sense of obligation and grateful remembrance of his Creator's goodness to him, celebrate the stupendous works
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of creation, providence, and redemption, and appropriate for that purpose one day in seven, agreeable to what is recommended in sacred writ; or if he wants no instruction, no counsel, no assistance; then let all regard to such a practice be laid aside. But if, on the contrary, such a stated portion of time for the above purposes, and such social religious worship, appear not only just and reasonable, as expressive of gratitude, but as calculated to civilize mankind, to refine their thoughts, enlighten their understandings, and sweeten their tempers; if it has a natural tendency to improve men in the most useful knowledge and highest wisdom, in the controul of their passions, in the regulation of their appetites and desires, in the detection of their errors and reformation of their conduct; if it is a likely means of nourishing and cherishing the christian virtues, and giving vigour and stability to the principles of piety, filial fear, and gratitude to our Maker, and universal love and charity to all our fellow-creatures; then sure it is an affair of no small importance, to devote one day in seven to religious purposes, to the worship and praise of the great Creator of the

the universe, for his wonderful works to the children of men, both in their creation, preservation, and redemption.

Son. If such good effects as you mention, were the usual consequences of keeping holy a seventh day, we should certainly see them amongst those who are zealous observers of the Lord's day; but this is not always the case. Some such appear to be no better than their neighbours.

Father. I MUST confess, that there is too much truth in your observation; and that we see but little good resulting from christians pretending to keep the Lord's day. However it is not fair to conclude, from the abuse of any thing, that it is not in itself good. Will any object to the use of wine, and wholesome food, because they are sometimes abused? Whatever others think or do, they must be responsible for it; it is our business to take care, that we do not neglect our own proper work. There are means of improvement put into our hands, and it is incumbent upon us, to use them for that purpose. Our eternal interest is at stake, and demands our utmost attention and activity. When we consider the reasonableness, and advantages, of keeping
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ing the Lord's-day, we should be thankful, that it is not expressly commanded, because of this pleasing reflection; that we have now an opportunity of devoting, to the service of our Maker, in the freest manner, one seventh part of our time.

Son. BUT suppose you should be mistaken, and impute that to the dictate of reason, which may be the effect of enthusiasm, and error of judgement; for we see many good people involved in great errors and inconveniences, by religious zeal and mistaken opinions.

Father. IN affairs of consequence, it is always esteemed a mark of wisdom, when things are dubious, to chuse that side which is safest. But in this case, there is nothing dubious, nothing uncertain; for whoever will only try the experiment, will most surely find, from a free and voluntary obedience to the divine will, that peace, tranquility, and joy, will be the result of such a conduct, together with progressive improvement in all those virtues, which dignify human nature, extend its usefulness, and prepare it for immortality. If this be delusion, may I always be so deceived.

D I A

D I A L O G U E VIII.

Son.

CAN you think, Sir, that the great Lord of the universe will take any such notice of man, as to reward or punish him for his conduct?

Father. Indeed I do, and with great pleasure survey my existence, situation, and future prospects. I feel myself happy, in proportion to my adherence to those rules of conduct, which all agree to be conducive to the welfare of Society, and declarative of gratitude to the Creator. § If you could prevail with yourself,

§ If it is right in a benevolent Father, to prescribe rules of conduct to his Family, he knowing best what will promote their greatest good; would it be unjust or unbecoming, were he to exclude those from his favor, who reject his advice, and oppose his authority, or to distinguish, with marks of his approbation, those who

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to try and practise the christian virtues, till you come to love them; you would then be assisted from above, and enabled to overcome all those difficulties, which now obstruct your progress in that divine life, which leads to contentment, peace, and joy here, and to eternal glory hereafter.

Son. If these virtues were but half as easy to transplant into the heart, as to delineate upon paper, I should make no difficulty to embrace and practise them; but it is no easy matter to exchange old habits for new. However, I should be obliged to you, Sir, to point out to me the easiest means of acquiring these.

Father. Let every morning, and evening, witness to your solemn adoration of your Maker: Worship him from a principle of gratitude, with humility and reverence: Be thankful for every comfort and enjoyment of life: Moderate your affections to the world: Endeavour

are dutiful and obedient? In like manner, the wise Parent of Intellectual Natures may justly challenge filial obedience from all his children, reward the dutiful, and punish the disobedient. The seeds of immortal life and joy are sown in the breasts of all mankind. The means of cultivation are put into our own power, and if we do our part, success will reward our labors.

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to estimate every thing according to its true worth : Let not the customs of the world prevail with you, to do any thing, which your conscience disapproves : Be superior to the frowns and favors of men, when your duty requires it : Conscientiously devote, to the honour of your Maker, one seventh part of your time ; for if the men of the world think it right to celebrate, with anniversary festivity, the great events of mortal deeds, surely every religious man should glow with holy zeal, to record and celebrate, weekly, the stupendous works of Creation, and the astonishing transaction of man's Salvation ; events in which we are too much interested, to be innocently indifferent : Be careful not to bring any disgrace upon religion : Avoid all ostentation ; Seek the favor and approbation of God, before that of men : Beware of dissimulation and hypocrisy : Be firm and steady in your resolutions of fidelity to God, and a conscientious regard to his will at all times, whatever opposition you may meet with, either from the world, the flesh, or the Devil : As you would, no doubt chuse to avoid afflictions and troubles, take care not to

make them necessary : If daily experience of your own errors, do not so operate upon your mind, as to mortify pride and self confidence, and at the same time dispose you to humility, meekness, gratitude to God, and benevolence to your fellow creatures ; then you may expect (unless given up as incorrigible) such visitations of afflictions, as may work upon the Soul (as sanative Physick upon the body, till health is restored) that the mind may be well established in virtue : Avoid flattery, as the plague, and be so deeply sensible of your own weakness, as to shun as much as possible the danger of temptation ; and with devout addresses to the throne of grace, in the name of your Redeemer, solicit for divine aid, to keep you from every evil. Then you may humbly hope for, and with filial confidence depend upon, all needful help and assistance. It is not necessary for you to know the mode, or manner, by which that aid is communicated ; your obligation to your Creator is the same, whether mediate or immediate, whether directly from himself, or by the intervention of his ministring spirits.

LASTLY,

L A S T L Y, make yourself very familiar with the Scriptures. The truths therein contained are able to make you wise unto salvation. Let them not depart from thine eyes ; keep them in the midst of thine heart. Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go, keep her, for she is thy life. If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding : If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her, as for hid treasures ; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

CHAPTER IV

THE first of the four main divisions of the subject is the history of the science of the mind. This is a branch of knowledge which has been cultivated for many centuries, and which has produced many valuable results. The second division is the history of the science of the body. This is a branch of knowledge which has been cultivated for many centuries, and which has produced many valuable results. The third division is the history of the science of the soul. This is a branch of knowledge which has been cultivated for many centuries, and which has produced many valuable results. The fourth division is the history of the science of the universe. This is a branch of knowledge which has been cultivated for many centuries, and which has produced many valuable results.

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWIXT THE

AUTHOR

AND THE

Rev. JOHN WESLEY.

TH E following Letters
were occasioned by the
Author's sending the Rev.
JOHN WESLEY his former
Publication entitled, **FAMILY**
PRAYERS, &c.

L E T T E R I.

To Mr. ———

S I R,

Feb. 26, 1772.

I H A V E read with pleasure your ingenious Book, which contains many just and noble sentiments, expressed in easy and proper language. I observe only two points in which we do not quite think alike. One of these is expressly treated of in that Tract, which reduces us to that clear dilemma, * “ Either JESUS CHRIST was G O D, or he “ was not an honest man.” The other is largely considered in the Book, of which I now desire your acceptance.

* Might it not be retorted upon Mr. WESLEY, “ That if CHRIST was the supreme God, he was not “ an honest Man.”

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Wishing

Wishing you all happiness in this life,
and in a better, I remain,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Servant,

JOHN WESLEY.

L E T T E R II.

To the Rev. Mr. JOHN WESLEY.

London, March 27, 1772.

Dear Sir,

YOUR favor of the 26th ult. I received, and also the kind present of your Book on Original Sin; for both which, I return my sincere and hearty thanks. As it is one of my warmest wishes to have the approbation and friendship of the wise and good, so when I cannot see things of importance in the same light as they appear in to them,

them, it necessarily occasions pain and uneasiness. Permit me therefore to lay before you, the real motives which induced me to embrace two opinions so different from yours, and which still bind them upon my conscience, and then tell me by what means I can possibly receive more satisfaction and evidence concerning the truth.

IN the early part of life, I was so zealous for, and so tenacious of, the doctrines of the Trinity and Original Sin, by being educated in those principles, that, for many years, even to question the truth of either, appeared, if not damnable, at least a malicious suggestion of the Devil; which thought made me so confident, and deaf to any reasoning on these subjects, that it appeared to me, the height of presumption, and great impiety, to doubt the truth of doctrines which had stood the test of ages, had received the sanction of venerable antiquity, the suffrages of the renowned Fathers of the Church, and the broad seal of modern orthodoxy. And it is very probable, that if I had been educated for the Pastoral Office, I should implicitly have adopted the opi-

nions of fallible men, and have satisfied my mind with their subtle distinctions, and peremptory decisions, in favor of these doctrines; so that no reasoning, no arguments, would ever after have had any weight in the contrary scale. But being engaged in business, I had no leisure for polemical disquisitions: and attending public worship where no human authority was exercised to enforce belief in disputable doctrines, I was induced to read my Bible, (when I had time for reading) rather than bodies of divinity, and books of religious controversy; by which means, I was, and still remain, in a great measure, a stranger to those religious disputes which unhappily divide the Christian world, and give such melancholy occasion to the enemies of our holy religion to triumph and blaspheme. In the scriptures, I found many truths, many lessons of instruction, plain, clear, and easy to be understood; and on them I built my belief of those which appeared less plain and easy; till at length, nothing appeared to be required as matter of belief, and practice, but what my reason approved, as intelligible, rational,

tional, and good, clearly conducing both to my present and future happiness. I could easily see that some errors were slipped into our translation, by the fallible men who engaged in that service. Therefore I conclude, that where difficulties occurred in other places, the translation might be imperfect, and I cannot but think it is a great reproach to men of learning, professing godliness, that they will not concur in the spirit of meekness and love, to restore to mankind the true primitive sense and meaning of dubious texts of scripture. The more I see and hear of religious disputes, the more I am convinced of the danger of leaning to human authority, and the necessity of keeping close to our Lord's injunction, to call no man master upon earth; and I firmly believe, that if the teachers of the Gospel would adhere to that rule, and not insist upon the opinions of Fathers, Councils, Synods, or any of the glosses and illustrations of learned men, to establish tenets, and controverted dogmas, but press upon their hearers, with all their force and vigor, moral duties, as our Lord did, and vie with one another in inculcating those

those two capital commands of love to GOD, and love to man, our Clergy would grow into reputation, be more united, respected, and useful, than at present they are; their influence would be much greater with all rational men, and their auditors more numerous, wiser, and better. I doubt not but you will agree with me that this appears a likely means of silencing the artillery of deists and infidels, of healing divisions, and giving a wider spread to the truths of the Gospel, throughout the trading part of the world. Why then will not our teachers let the Scriptures speak their own sense? Why will they not be contented with their Master's advice, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear?"

WERE our translation ever so perfect, and the Divine Will ever so clearly revealed, and easy to be understood, yet if the people are not permitted to read it, but through the coloured spectacles of fallible men, whose clerical power, classical learning, and rabbinical knowledge, afford no security against prejudice, error, and passion; then the Laity may as well return again to the See of Rome,

Rome, and, with their eyes shut, embrace all the absurdities of that corrupted Church. I hope you do not think, that I mean to reject the aid and assistance of pious learned men; no, far from it; I esteem them much, and am thankful for their ingenious and useful labours: I only object to our spiritual guides assuming any authority over the consciences of men, in matters of religious opinion and belief, being persuaded that whoever reads his Bible with attention, and with a sincere desire to know, and do, the Divine Will, and humbly looks up to Heaven for direction, and assistance, will not only be very safe, and secure against all hurtful errors, but experience such conviction of the truth of sacred things, as no human learning, or ability can ever communicate. Tho' I fear that I have already tired your patience, yet I hope you will excuse me for adding two short questions. 1st. Do you really think, that if a hundred, sincere, plain, morally honest men, were with attention and care to read over the New Testament, uninfluenced, unbiaſſed, and quite ignorant of the opinions of Commentators, that so many as two persons out of that

that number would be able to discover in this revelation of the Divine Will, that our adorable Redeemer, the appointed Mediator between G O D, and man, is indeed, and in truth, himself the great J E H O V A H, the only living and true G O D; or a Being of equal perfections with him?

2d. If, when the sense or meaning of any text of scripture appears uncertain, or dubious, I then make choice of that which appears most humiliating to myself, and most honourable to the Deity: as when I charge to actual personal guilt all that is evil in my temper, life, and actions, what good end can it answer, to persuade me, that the plague of Sin which I complain of, is not from myself, but originates from one wicked action of my first Parents?

AMIDST all the obscurity, anxiety, and trouble which flesh is heir to, it is a pleasing and consolatory reflection, that the time is hastening, when all the faithful servants of G O D shall have their imperfections, their prejudices, and errors, for ever done away, and shall unite in the strongest affection, in the sweetest accord and harmony, in songs of triumphant

umphant praises, to Him who sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb, for ever, and ever. That the Best of Beings may long continue your health, soften your cares, and increase your usefulness; that his holy spirit may lead you into all truth, and guide your steps to glory, is the sincere, and fervent prayer of

*Your affectionate Friend,
and obliged humble Servant,*

L E T T E R III.

To Mr. ———

Near Leeds, July 2, 1772.

Dear Sir,

I HAVE delayed answering your favor from time to time, hoping for leisure to answer it at large. But when that leisure will come, I cannot tell: For in the summer months I am
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almost continually in motion. So I will delay no longer, but write a little, as I can, tho' not as I would.

I INCLINE to think, that when you engaged in business, tho' you had no leisure for reading polemical writers, you had leisure to converse with those who ridiculed the doctrines, which you till then believed, and perhaps of hearing a preacher who disbelieved them, and talked largely against human authority, bodies of divinity, systems of doctrine, and compiling of creeds. These declamations would certainly make an impression upon an unexperienced mind: Especially when confirmed by frequent descants, upon the errors of translators; (altho' I really believe, our English translation, with all its faults, is the best translation of the bible now in the world.) When you had heard a good deal of this kind, then was the time to offer you such arguments as the cause afforded, which to a mind so prepared, would naturally appear, as so many demonstrations. And it is no wonder at all, that by lending you a few books, and properly commenting upon them, those new apostles should confirm you
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in the sentiments which they had so artfully infused.

To the questions which you propose, I answer, 1st. I really think, that if an hundred, or an hundred thousand sincere, honest, (I add, humble, modest, self-diffident) men, were with attention and care to read over the New Testament, uninfluenced by any but the Holy Spirit; nine in ten of them at least, if not every one, would discover that the Son of GOD was "adorable," and one GOD with the Father: And would be immediately led to "honour Him even as they honoured the Father." Which would be gross, undeniable idolatry, unless He and the Father are one.

2. THE doctrine of Original Sin is surely more humbling to man than the opposite. And I know not what honour we can pay to GOD, if we think man came out of his hands, in the condition wherein he is now. I beg of you, Sir, to consider the fact. Give a fair, impartial reading, to that account of mankind in their present state, which is contained in the book on Original Sin. It is no play of imagination, but plain,

clear fact. We see it with our eyes, and hear it with our ears daily. Heathens, Turks, Jews, Christians of every nation, are such men as are there described. Such are the tempers, such the manners of Lords, Gentlemen, Clergymen in England, as well as of Tradesmen, and the low vulgar. No man, in his senses, can deny it. And none can account for it, but upon the supposition of Original Sin.

O SIR, how important a thing is this ! Can you refuse to worship Him, whom "all the angels of G O D worship." But if you do worship One that is not the supreme G O D, you are an Idolater ! Commending you, and yours to his care, I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Servant,

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER

L E T T E R IV.

To the Rev. Mr. JOHN WESLEY.

James Street, July 10, 1772.

Dear Sir,

THOUGH I have no doubt of the candour, and benevolent spirit of Mr. WESLEY, yet I feel some reluctance, in laying before him the suggestions of my mind, on those two important subjects, wherein we differ in opinion; viz. the Trinity, and Original Sin. Not from any distrust of the truth of my principles, but diffidence of ability to do them justice. However, trusting to the goodness of your heart, I will venture to unbosom my thoughts with that freedom, which truth and friendship demand, and do hope, you will meet me on the same ground, uninfluenced by human authority, unarmed with theological subtleties, and unbiaſſed

biased by school divinity. This precaution appears to me the more necessary, when I consider the fallibility of all human judgment, and that the scripture alone, is the acknowledged rule of our faith, and practice. Till such time, as all human authority, in matters of religious faith and practice, is not only disclaimed, but utterly renounced, the consciences of men will always be held in captivity, and the precept of our Lord, to call no man master upon earth, will be as a dead letter, and lose all its intended salutary effect on the understandings of men. What abundance of mischief has ecclesiastical tyranny done in every age of the world, in proportion to its degree of power and influence? yet all under the specious pretence of good to the souls of men. Since therefore long experience so powerfully recommends this injunction of our Lord, why will not all pious Christians adopt the practice, and no longer attempt to lord it over one another, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men? As we know that religious prejudices easily take root, and are exceeding hard to eradicate; so when seconded by the passions,

passions, and armed with power; they never fail injuring the truth, sapping the rights of mankind, and leading them into dangerous and hurtful errors. You very well know, that the religious zeal of different sects (who hold tenets directly opposite to one another) will operate so strongly upon the majority, that their spiritual guides are able by that means to conduct them wherever they please, to the most hazardous enterprises, and even to persecute, under a strong persuasion, that, at the same time they are doing G O D service; but this can never be the way to come at truth; for as in Physicks, a few drops of pure elementary water are of more efficacy in dissolving hard glutinous bodies, than gallons of strong vinous spirits; so in divinity; a little plain honesty, tempered with common sense, is a better key to the treasures of scripture knowledge, than the whole bundle of gilded pick-locks, handed down from age to age, by the pretended successors of St. Peter.

IN support of your opinion concerning the Trinity, I observe, you lay great stress upon that text, which commands
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us to honor the Son; even as we honor the Father; and you make this conclusion, that whoever does so honour the Son, is guilty of idolatry, unless he believe both Father and Son equal in all perfections; this inference appears to me both harsh and uncharitable, and to have no foundation, but in the opinions of men: For I cannot help thinking, that this very command implies supremacy in the Father, from whom the command issued; and if he had bid us worship an angel, with equal sincerity as himself, could we with any propriety have controverted his orders, and refused obedience? or could we on that account, be chargeable with idolatry? My dear Friend, I am clearly persuaded, that if we will but lay aside the comments of fallible men, and believe our Lord himself, we can never consider him, and the great G O D, as two Beings of equal authority and power; for his words are very express, and intelligible: when he saith, "My Father
" is greater than I: This knoweth no
" man, nor the angels, nor the Son, but
" the Father only." "I can do nothing
" of my self, &c." "I ascend to my
" Father,

“ Father, and your Father, to my
 “ G O D, and your G O D.” He pray-
 ed, and likewise bid his disciples pray,
 to G O D, not to himself. And there
 are many other texts of the like import,
 with which, you are well acquainted.
 I know very well the turn which men
 skilled in controversy give to these plain
 passages of sacred writ ; but that ought
 not to prevail with us, to relinquish our
 right, to take the sense, and meaning
 of our Lord’s words, from his own
 mouth. Is it not great presumption,
 (to say the least) for any of our fellow
 creatures, (be their learning or station
 in life, ever so great) to take upon them,
 to tell Christians that they must not be-
 lieve such texts of scripture in the ob-
 vious, plain, and easy sense of the
 words ; but that our Lord here speaks
 not as G O D but man : So that without
 this illustration, the revelation of the
 divine will, had been no revelation. It
 is surprising that an evasion, that is so
 barefaced a perversion of scripture,
 should be current so long amongst men
 of great piety, great learning, and vir-
 tue. But religious errors are so hedged
 in by education, human authority, ex-
 ample,

ample, emoluments, and worldly honors, that we must no longer wonder at any inconsistencies made current by the broad seal of orthodoxy. That text where our Lord says, that he and his Father are one, would never have divided the world in opinion, had church authority never meddled with it: for a plain Christian, would have easily learned the meaning, as soon as he had read that other text, "Be ye one, as I, and my Father, are one." But the compass of a letter forbids my proceeding on this subject.

As to Original Sin, I am unwilling to believe any thing, but what the Bible teaches. The opinions of men are various, and such their skill in controversy, and fertility of invention, that it is dangerous trusting to any of them, in things of such moment; especially where prejudices, or interests, may be supposed to operate. At the same time, some of the arguments which are usually brought in support of the established opinions, I can discern to be very weak, and which, discredit those which are too learned for my investigation. Whilst learned men, have been bewildering the world

world with subtle conjectures, and ingenious comments, the truth of things, hath often escaped their notice, and fallen to the lot of the humble, devout enquirer. Tho' great respect and deference are due to all who faithfully labor in the word and doctrine of our holy religion, yet their opinions, on subjects of importance and difficulty, should only be considered as opinions, and never enforced upon the consciences of people, by any art or contrivance whatever.

By admitting human authority in matters of religious faith, a door is opened to all manner of corruption, and false doctrine: Witness every nation throughout the world, where religious establishments have been made; passion and interest striking in with early prejudices, have always rendered reformation next to impossible, without a miracle. If the rule of duty is so plain, that he who runs may read it, how happens it, that we see so wide a difference in religious opinions, even amongst well meaning, pious Christians, of various denominations? all zealously contending for their favorite discriminating opi-

nions, and all appealing to scripture for the truth of them. Is not this owing to the influence of human authority, and education principles? are not all the religious establishments in the world founded in human authority, and encouraged and supported by temporal motives, power, riches, and honors? However, we know that the kingdom of Christ, is not of this world, nor his subjects amenable for their religious principles to any earthly power whatever. Ought we not therefore, with a godly jealousy, to scrutinize into those doctrines which require human authority for their support and currency? To guard against temporal allurements on the one hand, and intimidation on the other? Sure I am, that if men would but separate the chaff from the wheat; I mean all human inventions, from the pure religion of the Gospel; the people of all ranks (if sincere) would have no great difficulty in understanding the scriptures, in their true, primitive sense, and meaning. Who that reflects on the direful effects of human authority, but must tremble for the ark of GOD, when touched by the unhallowed hands of

of fallible men? But I fear I have quite tired your patience, without entering into such a discussion of the subject of Original Sin, as I intended, and therefore, shall detain you no longer, but only to thank you for your kind letter of the second of July, 1772, and which I did purpose to have answered long ago. I remain, with great respect and esteem,

Dear Sir,

Your obliged humble Servant,

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Mrs. Hobs tells me, that you are expected from *Ireland* next month. I hope you will return in perfect health, in full possession of that generous pleasure which a good man always experiences from his success in his pious labors.

LETTER

L E T T E R V.

To Mr. ———

Windmill Hill, Oct. 9, 1773.

Dear Sir,

ON Scripture and common sense I build all my principles: Just so far as it agrees with these, I regard human authority.

G O D could not command me to worship a creature, without contradicting himself. Therefore if a voice from heaven bid me "honour a creature as " I honour the Creator," I should know, This is the voice of Satan, not of **G O D**.

T H E Father and the Son are not "two " Beings," but "One:" As he is man, the Father is doubtless "greater than " the Son;" who as such, "can do no- " thing of himself," and is no more Omniscient than Omnipresent. And as man, he might well say, "I ascend " to my Father, and your Father," and pray to his Father and his **G O D**. He bids his disciples also, to pray to Him; but

but never forbids their praying to himself. I take this to be the plain, obvious, easy meaning of our Lord's words: And the only one wherein they are reconcileable with an hundred passages both of the Old and New Testament.

WITH regard to Original Sin, (I mean the proneness to evil which is found in every child of man) you have *supposed* it in the essays with which you favored me, almost from the beginning to the end: And you have frequently *asserted* it. Although you could not assert it in plainer terms, than the honest, unbiassed Heathens have done: "Vitiis nemo sine nascitur:" Hence, "Omnes natura proclives ad libidinem:" Hence, "Dociles imitandis turpibus et pravi omnes fumus."

BUT I believe nothing can set this point in a more clear and strong light, than the Tract which I beg you to accept of.* Accept likewise the best wishes of, Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Servant,

JOHN WESLEY.

* See the beginning of the next Letter.

L E T T E R VI.

To the Rev. Mr. JOHN WESLEY.

October 29, 1773.

Dear Sir,

I THANK you for your favor of the 9th Instant: and likewise for Mr. FLETCHER's Appeal to Matter of Fact, and Common Sense, &c.

I heartily agree with you, in a total rejection, of all human authority in religion, which hath not scripture, and common sense, for its foundation, and sincerely wish that all professors of Christianity, were not only of the same sentiment, but would honestly, and faithfully examine their own hearts, in order to find out, the true spring of their religious opinions: whether they originate from the pure word of GOD, or are derived from systems, and creeds of fallible men. We know, that the minds of youth resemble the Potter's ductile clay,

clay, being susceptible of any impression: and as that by the heat of the furnace, becomes hard, and stubborn, so, the heat of opposition, and fire of persecution, generally produce inflexibility, and a greater firmness of opinion, (whether right or wrong) in all mankind. Errors and prejudices, will stick to the best of men, and perhaps with greater tenacity in proportion as they happen to excel in human learning, and popular accomplishments; because, as their immediate concern, when opposed, is defence, they have more skill and stratagem, more invention and subtlety, to countenance and support their opinions: especially, when a fair reputation is at stake, and their opinions are corroborated, by the suffrages, of great, and good men, or some pious Fathers of the Church, whose venerable characters cast a kind of awful sanction around their works, and forbid a doubt.

THERE is therefore, no safety but in the sacred writings, and to them alone, recourse should be had in all cases of doubt and difficulty. Glosses, and comments, have their use, but should never be pressed upon the consciences of men:

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I confess, that I am so sensible of my own weakness, and have seen so much in others, that I have great diffidence, in all human judgment, but the highest veneration, and value for the Bible. If I dared to follow any man implicitly, it would be him, who appears to me, to have done most good to the souls of men. And I frankly declare to you, that I have had some misgivings, or doubts, upon my mind, concerning those opinions, in which we differ, when I have compared your societies, with those which I mostly frequent; in the one, there appeared much self-denial, great zeal, and fervour of devotion, spiritual joy, and crowded audiences. In the other, an appearance of careless inattention, languid devotion, and dull formality; and consequently, thin assemblies, and but little prospect of success in the great work of man's salvation. But upon cool reflection, this wide difference does not appear to be owing so much to right principles, as to right actions. Your people, being roused by an affecting address to their passions, of hope, and fear, by their skilful and laborious pastors, have been,
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(as in the Parable) compelled to come in: and by uniting, in frequent acts of public and private devotion, evil habits, and bad company, have been broken off, repentance taken place, and peace, serenity, and joy, the natural consequence of conscientious integrity, succeeded. Therefore, the greater success of the Methodist Clergy is not, I apprehend, to be imputed to their embracing the Gospel with fewer errors than their neighbours, but because they are more in earnest, more diligent, and faithful in their Master's service, and less influenced, by the honors, riches, and pleasures of the world: even the very reproach, which they meet with, turns to their advantage, by driving them further from the snares of life, and cherishing the flame of devotion, which often chills and languishes at the approach of earthly prosperity, and the fascinating charms of sensual pleasure.

As all mankind, seem to have upon their minds, some sense of the Deity; and a monitor within to do his will; so, whoever stands forth in the sacred character of a pious divine, renouncing the honors of the world, for the good of

souls, will undoubtedly become popular, and have it in his power to draw after him; great crowds of admirers: provided, he does not combat popular prejudices, but strenuously maintains established doctrines, which the multitude receive with avidity, and maintain with obstinacy. Hence, let us admire the wonderful hand of Divine Providence, in the conduct of your's, and Mr. WHITFIELD's long and useful ministration! Had you two Gentlemen set out from College, warm in the glorious cause of reformation, with different principles from those of the common people, you could not have expected, any success like that, which you have now met with. You have been received as Angels of light: and the poor, have had the Gospel preached unto them. The Bible is more read, and valued amongst them, than before: and it will now be their own fault, if they do not become still wiser, and better. I have therefore considered your instrumentality of good to the world, in a light which perhaps few have done; for had you and Mr. WHITFIELD (I repeat it again) entered upon the ministry, with

with such sentiments of Original Sin, and the Trinity, as to me seem most consonant to Scripture, I much question (supposing my principles right) whether you would have done equal service to mankind. You might have cleared away many errors, and prejudices from the minds of men, confounded infidels by the strength of your arguments, and influenced some, to have embraced a religion, so rational, so benevolent, and manifestly tending to the present peace, comfort, and joy, and to the future felicity, of all its faithful adherents. But after conviction, after proving to a demonstration, the truth of things: you would still have found, the great work of reformation amongst the higher ranks of people, extremely hard; and much more difficult to accomplish, than amongst those, whose indigence, and labour, exempt them from the dangers of luxury, indolence, and pride, and weaken their attachment to the world, and all sensual gratifications. Such is the dangerous situation of the wealthy, and prosperous, that we see but very few, who are not hurt thereby. Example, flattery, pleasure, ambition, all combine,
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to draw aside the mind, from the strait line of duty, and weaken the impressions of conviction. The truth is, in religious matters, right sentiments, a clear and accurate judgment, extensive knowledge, and profound erudition, are of no avail, if a suitable conduct, that of a holy and good life, be wanting.

WHATEVER are the means of reformation, thankfulness is most justly due to the great Arbiter of all events: tho' at present, (like bitters for health) they are not joyous, but grievous. As the flesh and spirit, are at continual variance, so, those who are most immersed in the cares, and pleasures of the world, are doubtless, in the greatest danger of making shipwreck of faith, and a good conscience, and are the hardest to be persuaded, to embrace a humble, pious and holy life. To such persons, sickness, and affliction, have often been of more real service than the clearest conviction of the truths of Scripture, or the strongest sense of obligation, to gratitude, and love. Such is the folly, and weakness, of many good Christians, that they render afflictions necessary, to keep them

them in the path of duty; for we are well assured, that our Heavenly Father, does not willingly afflict the children of men. True religion, is most certainly a practical thing: and modes of faith, speculative knowledge, forms, and ceremonies, are of no further service, than as they tend to make men wise, and good, faithful to their Creator, and affectionate to one another. But these duties, imply such a regulation of the passions, as to many persons, seems like cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye: and therefore, they are offended, and ready to fall off, into a more easy, and commodious road, if such a one could be found: hence popular preachers, are in danger of relaxing man's obligation to moral virtue: treating it, as filthy rags, the froth of human vanity, the quicksand of philosophy, and relicks of legal preaching; substituting in its stead, an unwarrantable confidence, that the precious blood of CHRIST, will, without works, atone for all their sins, be their aggravations ever so heinous, and purchase for them, be their tempers ever so bad, everlasting salvation. Such doctrines represent duty,

ty, so very easy, and palatable to a vicious taste, that it is no wonder to see, vast numbers croud those assemblies, where they are preached.

THERE is another objection, frequently made against some of our popular preachers, and I heartily wish, there was no just ground for the charge; and that is, their want of charity for other churches, leading their people into an opinion, that salvation is only to be had in their own way of worship, and that all who believe not as they believe, are in danger of eternal destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. Alas! that any amongst the children of men, should take upon them, to limit infinite mercy; and prescribe bounds to divine goodness: when they know, that He who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works, hath positively declared, that He, will render to every man, according to his works; and that in every nation, those who fear him, and work righteousness, shall be accepted of him: and that where little is given, there but little will be required. Differences in opinion, ought never to divide Christians,

tians, whose criterion of character it is, to love one another. As to your opinion, that the Father and Son, are not two Beings but one, permit me to say, that I cannot believe what appears so like a contradiction, tho' I will not venture to say it is so, on account of the great esteem I have for its author: but only wish, he would expunge from his mind, all human comments, on the controverted texts of sacred writ, and then, I make no doubt but we should perfectly agree. I have read with attention Mr. FLETCHER's Demonstration of Man's corrupt and lost Estate, &c. but I must confess, it falls far short of the point in my opinion, and affords no proof, of the whole race of Adam being contaminated with their Father's guilt, and for his *one* transgression, meriting eternal torments. Mr. FLETCHER has indeed given a woe-ful picture of human nature, and represented the condition of man since the fall, as destitute of the means of virtuous actions, or of any considerable degree of happiness, in this life. According to him, every species of animals, revolt against him, and all nature, joins in the conspiracy. But this way of ar-
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guing,

guing, however necessary to support his opinion, is, I apprehend, far from doing any credit to religion, or promoting the cause of truth and virtue. For my own part, if I may speak as I find, I think the world is a storehouse of pleasure; that there is scarce an object that meets the eye of man, but is formed to give him delightful entertainment; all the variegated scenes of nature appear to me, conspiring to his benefit. There is such a profusion of gratuitous blessings, scattered through all the walks of human life, as are more than sufficient for each individual, if man to man, were just. So that the whole earth (as the Psalmist expresses it) is full of the goodness of G O D. By the best authority we are assured, that He, is good to all, and that his tender mercies, are over all his works. That he waits to be gracious, and that he would have all men to repent, and come to the knowledge of the truth; which certainly implies some power, some ability, already given to all men for that purpose: it would be injurious to think otherwise of the Almighty; and therefore, I can never admit of such a thought. If it is in the
nature

nature of truth, to give full satisfaction to the mind; If continual peace, serenity, and joy, are its genuine offspring; If a grateful sense of divine goodness, influencing the mind, to a filial fear of offending its Creator, and to a fiducial trust in his gracious promises, through the merits of his beloved Son, attended with a warm affection to our fellow-creatures, are true signatures of a christian temper, I humbly hope, I may claim their testimony, and take the comfort of such accumulated evidence, in favor of my religious principles.

I HOPE you will excuse the prolixity; and errors of this epistle, and believe me

Your affectionate humble Servant,

L E T T E R VII.

To Mr. ———

December 28, 1773.

Dear Sir,

U P O N the head of authority we are quite agreed: Our guides are scripture and reason. We agree too, that preachers who “relax our obligation to moral virtues, who decry holiness as filthy rags, who teach men that easy, palatable way to heaven of Faith without works,” cannot easily fail of having a multitude of hearers, and that therefore it is no wonder, if vast numbers croud *Blackfriar’s Church*, and the Chapel at the *Lock*.

T H E R E is also too “just a ground for charging the preachers both there, and at the *Tabernacle*, with grievous want of Charity.” For most of them flatly maintain, “All who do not believe as they believe, are in a state of damnation:”

“ nation ;” All who do not believe that absolute decree of Election, which necessarily infers Absolute Reprobation.

BUT none were induced to hear, my Brother or me, or those connected with us, by any such means as these ; just the reverse. We set out upon two principles, 1. None go to heaven, without holiness of heart and life : 2. Whoever follows after this, (whatever his opinions be) is my brother, and sister, and mother. And we have not swerved an hair's breadth from either one or the other of these to this day.

THUS it was, that two young men, without a name, without friends, without either power or fortune, “ set out “ from College, with principles totally “ different from those of the common “ people,” to oppose all the world, learned and unlearned, to “ combat popular “ prejudices” of every kind. Our first principle directly attacked all the *wickedness*, our second, all *bigotry* in the world. Thus they attempted a *reformation*, not of opinions (feathers, trifles not worth the naming) but of men's tempers and lives, of vice in every kind, of every thing contrary to justice, mercy,

mercy, or truth. And for this it was, that they carried their lives in their hands, that both the great vulgar and the small looked upon them as mad dogs, and treated them as such: Sometimes saying (in terms) "Will no body knock that mad dog on the head?"

LET every one then speak as he finds: As for me, I cannot admire either the wisdom, or virtue, or happiness of mankind. Wherever I have been, I have found the bulk of mankind, Christian as well as Heathen, deplorably ignorant, vicious, and miserable. I am sure they are so in *London* and *Westminster*. Sin and Pain are on every side. And who can account for this, but on the supposition, that we are in a Fallen State? I have proved at large, it can no otherwise be accounted for. Yet none need perish: For we have an Almighty Saviour: One who is able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto GOD through Him, I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Servant,

JOHN WESLEY.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R VIII.

To the Rev. Mr. JOHN WESLEY.

January 12, 1774.

Dear Sir,

I RECEIVED with pleasure your favor of the 28th of last month, and though we cannot quite agree in our sentiments on some few subjects, yet, I hope that will not prevent such a friendship as will last for ever. It is a pleasing and a glorious prospect, which opens to the view of all those who can with sincerity and truth adopt that pious and benevolent declaration of our Lord's: "Whoever doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, the same is my mother, and brother, and sister." True religion lies more in the heart, than in the head; more in practice, than speculation; in faith that works by love,
and

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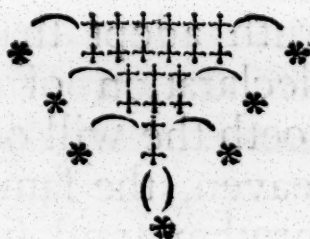
and manifests itself by fidelity to GOD,
and love to man; I hope that I need not
tell you, that I wish to be remembered
in your prayers, that I may be kept
from temptation, and assisted to do, at
all times the will of GOD.

WITH great respect and esteem, I
remain,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate humble Servant,

—————



A
S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D I N

PRINCES-STREET, WESTMINSTER,

J U L Y 21, 1776.

By ANDREW KIPPIS, D. D.

Occasioned by the DEATH of

SAMUEL SPARROW, ESQ.

C H E S T E R F I E L D ;

P R I N T E D B Y J. B R A D L E Y, 1782.

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REVELATIONS, c. xiv, v. 13.

And I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labours; and their Works do follow them.

IT is observed, by the Apostle, St. PAUL, that whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. This is an observation which is justly applicable to the sacred records in

general, and which is particularly true with respect to the prophetical parts of these records.

IT was not the design of G O D, in the predictions he hath set before us, to satisfy our curiosity with an useless knowledge of future events; but to exhibit an important and standing evidence of divine revelation, and to furnish an immediate support to the minds of the pious and upright, under the various calamities of life, by such an insight into what should hereafter happen, as might convince them, that the cause of truth and righteousness would at length be victorious over all opposition. Hence it was, that when holy men spoke under the dispensation of the Old Testament, as they were moved by the spirit of the Lord, they were usually commissioned to do it at a season, in which the afflicted circumstances of the Church rendered some extraordinary encouragement peculiarly necessary.—When the faith of the sincerely good began to fail, and they were ready to fear lest the enemies of religion would bear down all before them; then did the Almighty see proper to reveal those momentous

momentous and sublime prophecies, concerning the appearance and transactions of the Messiah, which assured the righteous, that Jehovah reigned supreme in the earth, and that he would render his name compleatly glorious.

WHAT hath been asserted concerning the conduct of the Almighty, during the times of the Jewish Theocracy, is equally true in regard to those notices of his future will, which he hath been pleased to afford, since the promulgation of the gospel.

IN proof of this, we shall only appeal to the manifest intention of the Revelations, which were given to St. JOHN, in the island of *Patmos*; Revelations that were delivered at a period, when christianity was ready to suffer the severest persecutions, from the civil powers of the world; and which inform us, that notwithstanding the evils, to which the faithful servants of JESUS should be exposed, from the rage and malice of their enemies, they should still be under the protection of the great Governor of the universe, who would either display his perfections and providence in their favor in the present state,
or

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or

or else confer upon them a glorious reward in the life to come. This was an information, than which nothing could be better adapted to animate their hearts, under every distress. An information too, it is, that is not only made known by the general tenour of the book of Revelations, but exhibited, likewise in the several particular passages; among which, the text bears no inconsiderable rank, “ And I heard a
 “ voice from heaven, saying unto me,
 “ Write, Blessed are the dead which die
 “ in the Lord, from henceforth; Yea,
 “ faith the spirit, that they may rest
 “ from their labours; and their works
 “ do follow them.”

IN these words we may observe, the lively and striking manner, in which, the declaration contained in them, is introduced; the characters of the persons of whom the Apostle speaks; and the blessedness which persons of such character obtain. Let us consider,

First, The lively and striking manner, in which, the declaration contained in the text, is introduced.

HAD a promise so glorious been delivered in the coldest terms, it must have

have raised a divine delight in the breast of every one, who was sensible of its importance. But there is a grandeur, and energy, in the words, which must be particularly agreeable to those, who have a taste for the sublime in writing; nor can their spirit and dignity be unfelt by any reflecting mind.

St. JOHN had, in some preceeding chapters, been describing the melancholy state, which the church would experience, for a long period, during the troubles and persecutions it would suffer, under the dominion, as seems probable, of popery. A prospect of so dismal a nature would tend to dispirit the hearts of christians, and to fill them with gloomy and disconsolate apprehensions. But in order to dispel their fears, to enliven their hopes, and to confirm their faith, the scene, in the fourth chapter, is removed to the celestial world: and we are presented with several beautiful displays, of the unchangeable and exalted happiness, which those shall receive, who continue steadfast in the cause of righteousness and truth, amidst surrounding difficulties and oppositions; it is no less than a
voice

voice from heaven which declares the blessedness of such as die in the Lord. It is a voice from heaven; that is, from above; a supernatural voice; and consequently, a voice which originally proceeded from that sacred place, where the eternal Deity erects his throne, in a peculiar manner, and communicates the rays of his presence, with a peculiar glory. Moreover, the reviving voice, by which the felicity of the righteous is so solemnly ascertained, is confirmed by the spirit of GOD; the spirit of GOD echoes to the delightful truth; Yea, saith the spirit that they may rest from their labours. But the strong and lively manner, in which the declaration of the text is introduced, presents us with something, far more weighty than the ideas of beauty and sublimity: for hence we may learn its certainty; its importance; and the noble encouragement we may receive from it.

THAT the certainty of the promise is implied in the mode, in which it is delivered, will be obvious upon the least reflection. For the words uttered, are represented, as proceeding from the commission and appointment of the Almighty,

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mighty, and as pronounced in a distinct and audible Way. Besides that the holy Spirit (the character of which is to be the spirit of truth) joined issue with the voice from above, and confirmed the declaration, equally evident is it, that the importance, as well as the truth of the promise contained in the text, is implied by the manner in which it is introduced.—That undoubtedly cannot be a trifle, which is ushered in with such a pomp of majesty. Shall a particular message be delivered to the Apostle by divine revelation; shall he be commanded to place it on perpetual record; and shall it be ratified by the spirit of GOD? can we then hesitate a moment in determining, whether it be something highly interesting to mankind?

In this view, it is remarkable, That the spirit should be mentioned in a way very striking, and very uncommon; but the importance of the text, is apparent from the mere survey of its contents. What can be a more weighty declaration than this; That such, and such only, as die in the Lord, shall be made partakers of eternal happiness?

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What truth can better be adapted to support our souls under the complicated calamities of life, and to convince us of the absolute necessity of a steady adherence to the religious temper, and laws of our great Master?

ONCE more; The manner in which the promise of the text is introduced, may be considered, as exciting in us, and as implying, that we ought to possess a more lively encouragement than we could have received, had it been delivered in more languid terms.

WHEN St. JOHN heard this divine voice from heaven, his heart glowed no doubt with unutterable delight; an exile, tho' he was in a desert island, and subject to a merciless Roman emperor, who could at pleasure command him to tortures, and to death, we have the highest reason to believe, that he would reckon the sufferings of the present time, as not worthy to be compared with the glory he had heard revealed; and that he would readily adopt the language of his fellow apostles, and say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself; so that I may finish my course with joy."

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COMMON Christians indeed cannot be expected to profess so animated a pleasure from the words we are considering, as he who had the unspeakable satisfaction of hearing them pronounced. But yet they are recorded with such a peculiar emphasis, as cannot fail to excite the most agreeable and fervent emotions in every attentive mind; emotions, that will not be destroyed by the afflictions to which we are exposed, and which will enable us to bear them with resignation and fortitude, if we have the pleasing hope that we are entitled to the promise of the text. This brings me to consider,

Secondly, The character of the persons of whom the Apostle speaks, They are said to die in the Lord.—As such an immensity of bliss is promised to them that die in the Lord, it is of the utmost importance to know what is implied in that title, and to make it our own.

THE Revelations were delivered to St. JOHN, in the time of actual and approaching persecutions, when great numbers would be called to testify their attachment to their Saviour, by offering

up their blood ; and the promise of the text seems to be especially calculated for the encouragement of such persons. Hence therefore, some have been led to imagine, that the expression of dying in the Lord, signifies being put to death for adhering to his religion, and that it originally related to those alone, who gave that testimony of their regard to our blessed JESUS. But this interpretation conveys perhaps too limited a sense, and it is by no means necessarily warranted, by the proper import of the words ; which should rather seem to include all such, as die in the faith and obedience of the gospel. This is the meaning assigned by several celebrated commentators ; and herein I cannot but agree with them ; to be, then in the Lord, is in other words, to be a real christian ; and that is a character of such absolute necessity to our final welfare, that it behoves us seriously to examine wherein it consists.

Now it must imply, in the first place, a belief in JESUS, as the Messiah, and Saviour of mankind ; this the very name of christian evidently denotes. For whosoever, in any manner or degree,
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lays claim to that appellation, can look upon our Lord in no less a view than a great and glorious person, supernaturally sent by G O D, to make known his will to the race of Adam; to bring them into a state of acceptance with him here, and into a state of everlasting felicity hereafter. To esteem the Son of man to be, at the same time, the Son of G O D, in a peculiar sense; to receive the things which are written concerning his character and office; to believe in whatever he hath revealed, concerning the nature and worship of the eternal Jehovah; concerning the duty of human beings; concerning the way of being reconciled to our Maker; concerning a future state; the resurrection of the dead; the final judgment; and the important consequences of that awful transaction; is to be a christian, in the very lowest meaning of which the phrase is capable; *viz.* as signifying a speculative assent to the truth of the gospel, in contradiction to infidelity. This multitudes are, who have no just claim to the appellation and rewards in the text. Being in the Lord, must, therefore, further denote, That we entertain

tain sincere and practical expectations from CHRIST, as the Saviour of the world. Merely to believe in the great and glorious things which he hath done for mankind, will be of little avail, if that belief doth not influence our hearts, and our affections; if it doth not induce us, to place our hopes of happiness in the blessings revealed, and offered in the New Testament.

It is certain from the whole tenor of sacred writ, that the blessed JESUS appeared, not only as a divine teacher, but as our mediator, and advocate with the Father, thro' whom are communicated pardon, assistance, and eternal life.

INIQUITY hath made a wide breach between us, and our Maker; and we were liable to the punishment of an endless destruction; but the rich and essential mercy of GOD interposed; and the more effectually to display, and secure, the design of his mercy, he commissioned his well beloved Son, to be the conveyancer of our happiness; and by his suffering and perfect obedience, to obtain the mighty honor and privilege, of conferring everlasting redemption on his faithful disciples.

CHRIST

CHRIST therefore being constituted the dispenser of forgiveness and aid, of consolation and immortality, to be in the Lord, must imply, that to *him* our views are directed, that in *him* our hopes are placed, and that from *his* hands we expect to receive a crown of unfading glory.

BUT *that* alone which compleats the character of the persons spoken of in the text, is their compliance with the laws, and their conformity to the example of their great Master. Sincere and universal happiness is the result of genuine faith; and their pretensions to christianity are entirely vain, who do not cultivate the temper, and obey the precepts of the Saviour. Whoever is truly in the Lord, so as to be interested in the mighty blessings displayed in the New Testament, must regard him as his *Legislator*, his sovereign, and his grand pattern.

THE design for which the redeemer hath done so much in our favor, is, that that we may be holy in all manner of conversation; "Ye are my disciples," saith he, if ye do whatsoever I command you." This we see, is the test
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he hath himself prescribed, as *that* by which his faithful servants are to be known and distinguished; and therefore, we need not further enlarge, in order to prove, that our title, as christians, requires us to be penitent, affectionate, and obedient to G O D; upright, benevolent, and candid to mankind; temperate, humble, and contented with respect to ourselves; in short, that it requires us, to cherish and maintain all the dispositions, virtues, and graces, which are recommended by the example, and enforc'd by the commands and sanctions of our divine master. Finally, if we would conclude our course with satisfaction, our belief in the doctrines of JESUS, our regard to his name, and our observance of his laws, must be continued to the end of life. To obtain the felicity promised in the text, we must die in the Lord. Perseverance in well doing is that which crowns the work; for they only who are faithful unto death, shall receive the rewards of endless honor and glory.

SUCH is the character of the persons concerning whom the apostle speaks; and all who are of this temper and conduct,

duct, however they may differ with relation to sentiments of doctrine, or modes of worship; however they may be divided into distinct professions of separate societies; they are still united by the endearing appellation and bonds of christianity, and will be joint partakers of future blessedness. We now proceed,

Thirdly, To consider the happiness, which persons of such a character as we have briefly been describing, will at length possess. “Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”

WITHOUT entering into a critical discussion, concerning what is intended by the phrase, *from henceforth*, and which perhaps, may signify no more than that the rewards of the righteous shall commence immediately after their dissolution, we may observe, That the felicity specified in the text, divides itself into two parts, each of which deserves our contemplation.

It is asserted concerning such as die in the Lord, That they shall rest from their labours; the meaning of this is,

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that

that they shall be for ever freed from the toils, the sins, and the sorrows, of mortal life, and enjoy a delightful and endless tranquility. The words are equivalent to that passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, wherein we are told, That there remaineth a rest for the people of GOD. Tho' we taste of the mercy of our benevolent Maker, in instances innumerable ; and find such a vast profusion of good, diffused thro' all the productions of his power ; yet it is still an undoubted truth, that a compleat bliss is not to be found, in this inferior state. It is the wise, and even the gracious constitution of the most High, that, while we continue inhabitants of earth, we should be liable to disappointments and distresses. Need we appeal, in confirmation of so evident a truth, to the various diseases, incident to the human frame ; by which some cry out with acute pain, and others groan under long and wasting sicknesses ; by which the strength of the mighty is bowed down, the vigor of the healthful is withered, and the bloom of the beautiful is blasted ? need we appeal to the various cross accidents, which

which disperse the most agreeable expectations? need we appeal to the deprivation of riches, honors, and power; or to the frequent loss of those relations, and friends, from whom we derived, all the support and endearments of social life? need we appeal to the calamities which the wicked bring upon themselves, and others, by their vices; to the desolations occasioned by the ambition and injustice of princes; and to the torture which the rage of persecution hath inflicted on the steadfast and humble followers of JESUS? Alas! the characters are too sadly legible, wherever we turn our eyes, thro' the various ranks of mankind, to leave us a doubt, whether sorrow be not, in some measure, the portion of the children of Adam.

BUT there is another hindrance to our present rest, still more dreadful, and that is sin. Vice strikes at the very foundation of happiness, and is the principal source of the disorders, which deform the fair face of the creation. Multitudes there are, who are held in absolute slavery, by their criminal appetites, affections, and habits; and even

those who are truly righteous, feel, in their souls, the remainders of moral evils. Sincere tho' they be in their obedience, they are far from having attained to compleat happiness and goodness. Too often they shew, that there is no perfection of nature, or virtue, on this side the grave. Hence, the peace of their minds is interrupted, and they are obliged to maintain a laborious conflict, with their spiritual adversaries; but delightfully different will be the case of such as die in the Lord. Such as die in the Lord, shall be fixed in those happy regions, from which every thing that can disturb their rest, shall be eternally banished. Iniquity cannot enter their peaceful abodes, and sorrow shall be wiped away from their eyes. How desirable, how transporting, is the change they will undergo! here, they were exposed to various distresses, but hereafter, not the least breath of anxiety shall annoy their bliss. No longer shall they labour with strong pain on their beds, or groan under tedious illnesses; no longer shall they mourn the loss of those, on whom their affections were most ardently placed; no longer shall they be exposed

exposed to the ill treatment of an impious world. On the contrary, they shall possess unfading health, vigor, and beauty; they shall enjoy the company, and conversation of the most exalted friends; even of the just made perfect, of the holy angels, and of the blessed Redeemer, without the fear of being forsaken by them, and every circumstance shall conspire to increase their joy. No more shall the saints be tired with sin, and temptation.

IN the world to come, they shall be endowed with an un sullied purity of heart, and glow with the most amiable and godlike affections of the mind, being freed from the things, which, in this world, obstructed their felicity. How charming a serenity will take place in their breasts! how ravishing a delight will attend the reflection on the alteration they have experienced! As mariners, who have escaped the most threatening calamities, during the course of a tedious voyage, can view the tumults of the ocean, with particular pleasure, and from consciousness of their own safety, enjoy, as it were, the workings of the storm; so the upright and persevering

severing disciples of JESUS will look back, with inexpressible pleasure, on the dangers they have passed, and find their happiness greatly enhanced by comparing it with their former imperfect, and hazardous condition.

BUT secondly, It is asserted, concerning such as die in the Lord, That their works do follow them; what those works are, we cannot be at a loss to understand.—They are, in general, the virtues of the christian character; they are the piety and purity, the meekness and humility, the temperance and patience, the moderation and contentment, the resignation and submission, the justice and equity, of the faithful servants of our Lord and Master.

THEY are, in a very particular manner, their acts of benevolence, candor, compassion, and charity; for by these, they more immediately resemble their Maker, and their Saviour; by these, their dispositions, conduct, and rewards, are delineated, in that fine account of the last judgment, which is set before us, in the Twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew; and it is more especially, in these respects, that we are exhorted,
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not to be weary in well doing; because in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

THE works of those, who die in the Lord, may be said to follow them, as their graces shall accompany them into the future world; and this is a sense very beautiful, and important. It is an undoubted and an agreeable truth, that the lovely and shining train of divine accomplishments, which adorn the souls of the righteous in this life, shall continue to attend them, in that which is to come. Nay, those virtues which were here prevented, by the blasts of temptation, from growing up into full maturity, shall, when transplanted into favorable climes, and the kindly suns of the celestial regions, rise into complete excellence and perfection.

BUT what is more directly intended in the text, is the reward which shall hereafter be conferred on real Christians, according as their works shall be, as the scripture often expresses it. Not that there is a proper merit in our works, which can lay claim to so sublime, so endless a felicity. An obedience so imperfect as ours, cannot, in itself, pretend to
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the ineffable glories of the heavenly world. These glories must proceed alone from the boundless mercy of G O D ; and this mercy he hath communicated to us, by his dear Son.

NEVERTHELESS, the Almighty hath declared, that he will make the attainments of his people, the standard by which he will judge them : and this is agreeable to his nature, his perfections, the admirable designs of his moral government, and the essential difference between virtue and vice. Accordingly, the different degrees of happiness or misery, which will be allotted to mankind, at the last day, will be determined, by the different degrees of good and evil, which have prevailed in their characters.

AT that important period, therefore, when the kingdoms of the earth shall be destroyed ; when all the productions of human genius shall die ; when the mighty mountains of the globe shall tremble upon their bases ; when the present frame of nature shall be only one distinguished ruin ; and when the whole assembled race of Adam, from the beginning to the end of time, shall
appear

appear before the tribunal of JESUS; at that important period, the good deeds of the pious, the upright, the benevolent, shall be had in delightful remembrance; their amiable affections, their works of faith, and labors of love, shall stand up, and witness in their favor. The testimony shall be approved, by the Saviour's applauding sentence; and the happy consequence of this sentence, will be such a blessedness, as is beyond the most lively imagination to conceive.

YES, all that die in the Lord shall be followed by so great a reward, for their piety to G O D, and their benevolence to man; that is, every good thing shall be their eternal portion. Compleat shall they be, in whatever is glorious, excellent, and delightful. Their knowledge, their virtues, their bliss, will be always rising, with their rising minds. The farther they advance in existence, the nearer resemblance will they have, to the absolutely perfect originals of truth and beauty, holiness and happiness.

AND now as an improvement of what has been said, let us, in the first place, be thankful, that G O D hath left us so noble a promise upon record, for the

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encouragement of his servants, under their several trials, and conflicts.

THE goodness of the Almighty is discernable in every part of his conduct; for tho' the intention of divine government requires, that labor and sorrow should, more or less, be the appointed lot of human nature, yet our heavenly Father would not suffer us to be disconsolate, but hath afforded the most agreeable cordials, to animate our hearts, and revive our sinking spirits; the declarations of sacred writ furnish the richest sources of comfort; and that of the text stands foremost in the delightful catalogue; ushered in, as it is, with a peculiar sublimity; pronounced by a voice from heaven; ratified by the holy spirit; and expressly commanded to be written; to keep up the faith, the patience, and the constancy of the saints.

How should our souls be affected with gratitude to the God of grace and consolation, that he hath thus testified his affection to man, by providing for us such a noble support, and such a powerful aid, under the troubles, to which we are exposed.

SECONDLY, Since the promise of the
text

text is to them only who die in the Lord, how solicitous should each of us be, to preserve that character? To be a Christian indeed is a matter of the utmost importance. To be a Christian indeed includes in it every excellence, and comprises our highest honor and happiness; this is it which will enable us to bear the distresses of life, with patience and fortitude, and to meet the approaches of death, with serenity, and perhaps with gladness.

IF there ever was a real Christian, we have reason to believe, such an one existed in the person of our late excellent friend, Mr. SAMUEL SPARROW. He was firmly persuaded, upon the best grounds, and after the most diligent enquiry, of the divine original of the gospel; and having this persuasion, his faith did not terminate, in a cold assent to its truth, or a speculative conviction of its doctrines. It was his aim to act upon its principles, and to have his heart formed after its temper and spirit.

HE had a continual view to the laws, and to the example, of his great Master. Hence he learned, that his actions should ever be referred to one point, a regard

to the will of God. Hence, he cherished the most unaffected piety, devotion, and purity; cultivated the strictest moderation, temperance, and command over his passions; and maintained a tranquil acquiescence in the divine dispensations. Hence he was solicitous to promote the welfare of his fellow creatures, to the utmost of his power. For this purpose, he abstained from many personal gratifications and indulgences, which his fortune would have admitted, and which, scarcely any but himself, would have sacrificed.

INDEED, his philanthropy, benevolence, and charity, were remarkably large, and extensive; and constituted a most amiable, and striking part of his character.

To mention his public and private benefactions, would open a wide field; some of them were so great, and uncommon, that were I to relate them, they would not perhaps be credited; nor was it his intention that they should be known; and it is only by particular accidents and circumstances, that they have come to my knowledge; for he sacredly adhered to the rules of our Sa-
viour,

viour, not to let the left hand know, what the right hand doeth.

IN his acts of kindness, he studiously avoided every degree of ostentation; and they were always accompanied with the greatest modesty, and humility. He was not a man of the world; he sought not its praises, and was not governed by its maxims.

AMONG the objects of his beneficence, he had a particular regard to those institutions, and designs, which tended to rescue the rising generation from ignorance, vice, and misery; to spread religious knowledge, virtuous dispositions, and industrious habits, among the poor; to promote the study, and increase, of scriptural christianity; and to advance the interest of religious liberty.

To the cause of protestant Dissenters, he was a constant and zealous friend; and his loss to that cause in general, as well as to this society in particular, will be deeply felt. At the same time, he was not a bigot to any party; but loved the wise and good of every profession, and denomination.

His attachment to the civil and sacred rights of mankind, and to the integrity
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of conscience, was uniform, and ardent: it displayed itself in his life, and accompanied him to his death. In short, he was one of the best men I ever knew, or ever expect to be acquainted with; and G O D is my witness, that I have not been guilty of any intentional flattery, in what I have advanced; that I have said nothing but what I do most conscientiously believe to be true. We should wish, and pray, and endeavour, that such characters may be imitated, and encreased.

Our departed friend was an eminent instance of that happiness, which the Almighty is sometimes pleased to bestow at present, upon the temper and practice of religion. Being blessed with an easy fortune, a sound and healthful constitution of body, a serene and chearful temper, moderate and well regulated passions, pious and affectionate relatives, and acquaintance, a turn for reading and study, a philosophical and enquiring spirit, liberal views of nature, and nature's God, of providence and christianity, a devout and thankful mind, a warm and benevolent heart, an approving conscience, and a well grounded hope of immortality:
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his days glided on with an almost uninterrupted tranquillity, and gladness ; and in the last conversation I had with him, he assured me, That his life for several years past, had been a heaven upon earth.*

It was only wanting to the joyful conclusion of such a life, that his death should be equally composed and peaceful ; and that felicity he received, at the hands of his merciful Creator ; for he yielded up his breath suddenly and without pain. He was translated from us by an instantaneous dissolution ; which to survivors, was awful and affecting, but to himself, inexpressively delightful.

* The following extract from the Author's will, made about a year before his death, coincides with the above account, and manifestly points out his good and amiable disposition.

“ Being now, thro’ divine goodness, arrived near
“ the age of seventy years, in perfect health, and
“ sweet peace, and contentment of mind, I make
“ this, &c.” which he thus concludes,

“ Now thankfully acknowledging the divine goodness to me, thro’ a long life of continued health,
“ blessed with peace, plenty, and numberless enjoyments, I humbly wait his will for my dismissal
“ from the body, depending upon his mercy, thro’
“ Jesus Christ, for a blissful immortality.”

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LET it then be our concern and endeavor, to be followers of them who, thro' faith and patience, inherit the promises. This is a matter of the highest moment; for unless we be the disciples of JESUS, very miserable will be our condition. We know not how soon we may be called off the stage of present existence; and experience tells us, that the young, the blooming, and the healthful, are swept away by the universal leveller, as well as the infirm, and the aged.

IF therefore, we have any affection for our souls; any desire to avoid the divine displeasure; any wish to be interested in the promises of the gospel; if we think the glories of the celestial world worthy of our pursuit, it behoves us, while the day of grace is present, to regard the things which belong to our universal peace. It behoves us to be laying up a stock of graces and virtues to follow us, and appear for us, at the last day.

WE should indulge the godlike ambition, of desiring to shine with superior honor, when the Lord JESUS shall come to be glorified with his saints. We should

should be emulous of receiving from his hands a distinguished crown of reward, in that blessed world, where the works of the righteous will be had in everlasting remembrance.

LASTLY, let the promise of the text support us under all our doubts and troubles. This was the design for which it was given, and shall an intention so noble be frustrated? No, though afflictions surround us; though we are separated from our beloved relations, or friends, we will not sorrow as those without hope. Sensible that they are delivered from the uncertainties and evils of mortal life, we will congratulate them on their safe arrival into the harbour of perpetual rest, and boundless joy.

WE will endeavour to imitate the example of their graces, that thus we may obtain the same salvation. We will consider those that have gone before us, and who are enjoying the fruits of their victory, as looking down from their spheres of dignity, and of bliss, and as calling upon us, to tread in their steps. Do they not tell us, that if we continue to adhere a little longer, to the cause and

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practice of truth and righteousness, we also, shall be advanced to the like heights of honor and happiness?

A reflection, then, so transporting, shall confirm our perseverance in piety, our obedience to the divine will, our zeal for doing good, our fortitude in distress. A reflection, so transporting, under divine aid, shall in such a manner establish and increase our christian dispositions, our exemplary virtues, and our celestial graces, that, at length, it shall be pronounced at our dissolution, “Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” *Amen.*

